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13 PAGES OF JEDI BLISS

2 NEW EPISODE I GAMES
EXCLUSIVE SCREENSHOTS

33 STAR WARS GAMES:
THE COMPLETE HISTORY

50 SHOCKING STAR WARS
SECRETS REVEALED

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- ✓ AUNT BERU VS. THE RANCOR MONSTER
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ISSUE NUMBER **09**

MAY 1999

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DAIKATANA

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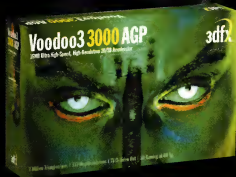
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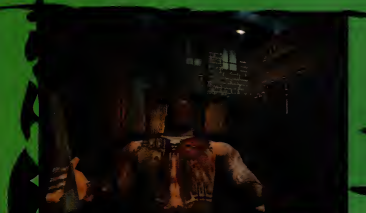
YOU'RE GONNA DIE.

YOU BUILD YOURSELF A REP WITH KILLINGS AND STREET KNOWLEDGE.

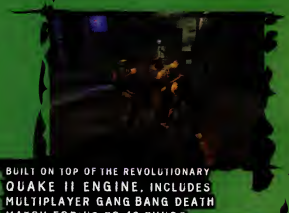
BUT THE HIGHER UP YOU GET, THE MORE THUGS WANT YOU DEAD.

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A whopping 13 pages is devoted to this celebration of everything Star Wars, including coverage of LucasArts' two new EP1 games

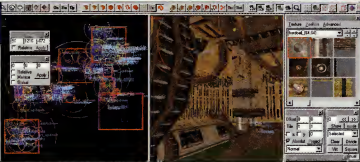
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Remember when games weren't designed by corporate behemoths? PCXL takes a look at a new crop of developers doing it on their own and thumbing their nose at "the man"



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ONLINE ARENA III

The only college league where playing *Quake II* all day long won't put you on academic probation. Plus, in the Zone — a survivor's story



X-TRA 114

More addled musings from the usual gang of idiots. This month: Game licenses you will never see, an undercover investigation on retail sales clerks, porn addiction and you, gaming beverages, bad game vengeance, and much, much more



ON THE COVER

The cover that almost was: In a galaxy far, far away, the PCXL cover had a hot chick (not Hot Chick, but close) wearing a tight half-tee with the old Star Wars logo covering her big ... deathstars. The caption read "Star Wars: Episode One — It's Gonna Be Huge." Unfortunately, in this galaxy, some corporate legal weasels kept our juvenile shenanigans from becoming reality. Our loss ... and yours

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The game where having hairy palms is not only allowed, but encouraged. Plus, celebrity werewolves exposed



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Gentlemen, we can rebuild it. Bigger, faster, stronger than before. *Mechwarrior 3* will be that game



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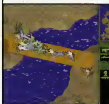
88 RETURN TO KRONDOR

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89 BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD DO U.

At Chuck's college, this would be a documentary



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Our fearless leader takes a stand on the issue of cloning, as in when other magazines try to clone PCXL, that is. You can clone sheep all you want

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Are *Unreal Tournament* and *Team Fortress II* ripping off *Quake III*? Two editors debate that very question in this month's First Person crack-a-thon

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"*Loveboy*" himself, '80s stud Billy Ocean bobs to the surface with his greatest hits — all two of them — coincidentally the same number of discs in this month's issue, both chock full of gaming goodness

COME AND KNOCK ON OUR DOOR!



CELEBRITY APPEARANCES

Wolfman Jack (Get yo' self nekkid), Ron Jeremy (the REAL Mr. Happy), Jennifer Love Hewitt (no, Jennifer Love HE), Marcia Brady (gubes of gold? Oh, yeaaaah), Zsa Zsa Gabor (Zank you, darling!), Dana Plato (Night Tramp), Jesse Camp (could be the antichrist), Rose McGowan (The Misery Chick), Paula Cole's armpit hair (Rob thinks it's sexy), Yinkie Winkle (Girlfriend!), Jerry Falwell (takes one to know one), Natalie Portman (New Star babe), Carrie Fisher (Star babe classic), and special guest star (eight issues in a row), Pamela Anderson

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THE YEAR

PC Gamer, PC Games, CNET Gamecenter, Blue's News, PC Accelerator...

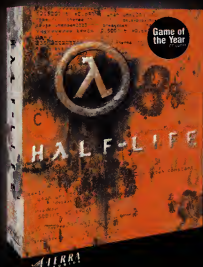
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EDITOR'S LETTER

THE CLONE WARS

They say imitation is the greatest form of flattery — if this is true, then color us flattered. When PCXL first launched, we set out to do a magazine unlike any other, staying far away from the conservative, almost lifeless tone of our competitors. Readers, industry pundits, and even the Washington Post (www.washingtonpost.com), then search for **PC Accelerator** find **PCXL** to be fresh, creative, and damn entertaining. And what happens when you shake up the status quo? Just think about the games industry and its clone wars. How many *C&C* clones were created on the back of Westwood's success? Ditto in the first-person shooter category, and, I'll be damned, the same seems to go for the magazine biz ...

We'd like to thank you for choosing **PCXL** amidst the sea of *Star Wars* covers currently cloning the newsstands. Read our story and I'm sure you'll agree that you've made the right choice. I'd also like to welcome those who used to read **PC Games** into our dysfunctional family of readers. We're a bit different, but I think you'll find more information and fun than anything you've ever read. We're just getting started on our magical journey, so strap in and get

ready for one hell of a ride. And if you ever want to know what we were doing six months ago, just read our competition.



MIKE SALMON, Editor in Chief

THE TEAM

EDITOR IN CHIEF

MIKE SALMON

EMAIL → mike@pcxl.com
CLONED FROM → Mike, unadorned testosterone (or so the claim)
STAR WARS MEMORY → "The first breasts I ever touched were the plastic morsels on my little doll — haven't been the same since"
DISCONCERTING FETISH → Plastic breasts — just cut 'em off, but enough
NOW PLAYING → Tribes, Quake II, Dark Forces, Half-Life, Team Fortress Classic

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

ROB SMITH

EMAIL → rob@pcxl.com
CLONED FROM → An especially hard-punked '90s PCXL con (and crackle-ed)
TOUCHING STAR WARS MEMORY → "I never would have seen the movie (I got my one-legged, mentally-retarded friend, Steven Harrison, who convinced me I should let me see the movie)"
DISCONCERTING FETISH → Crack
NOW PLAYING → Quake II, Allens Versus Predator, Solitaire (the fraidy won)

SENIOR EDITOR

DAN EGGER

EMAIL → dan@pcxl.com
CLONED FROM → The blind giant of Stane Phillips
TOUCHING STAR WARS MEMORY → When his 9 yr old sister projectile vomited down his dad's shirt during *Star Wars*
DISCONCERTING FETISH → Dreams of his headless sports mascot
NOW PLAYING → Tribes, Quake II, Tribes, Tribes, and some multiplayer Tribes

ASSISTANT EDITOR

CHUCK OSBORN

EMAIL → chuck@pcxl.com
CLONED FROM → The blind giant (or is it "years"? of Max Beer Jr.)
TOUCHING STAR WARS MEMORY → Every time Chewbacca cracks his emotional roars, Chuck had trouble holding back the tears
DISCONCERTING FETISH → Theme parks, Virtual theme parks — hell, parks in general
NOW PLAYING → Quake II, 8-B-B Do U

ART DIRECTOR

KYLE LEBOUF

EMAIL → kyle@pcxl.com
CLONED FROM → Assorted "parts" and a penion full of red popcicles
TOUCHING STAR WARS MEMORY → Selling his collection of *Star Wars* shit for about \$40 — estimated worth today \$8k
DISCONCERTING FETISH → Whenever she asks popcicles he goes "Cray" — in a killing other kids in elementary school kinds way (sweet, but true)
NOW PLAYING → Tribes, Furq 2

MARKETING EDITOR

PHILIP MAYARD

EMAIL → philip@pcxl.com
CLONED FROM → Carrie (the ex-PCXL Managing Editor, not the revitalized horror queen, although it's a thought)
TOUCHING STAR WARS MEMORY → Left midway through the movie to rush to the store and buy the dolls — action figures
DISCONCERTING FETISH → Once owned a giant, stuffed Chewbacca — and he really misses him
STOPS US FROM PLAYING → Quake II

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

ED LEE

EMAIL → ed@pcxl.com
CLONED FROM → A giant can of spam and a package of Ramen noodle soup
TOUCHING STAR WARS MEMORY → Ed is completely devoid of memories — we believe he is a droid
DISCONCERTING FETISH → Insane coverage of the word "parts"
NOW PLAYING → Tribes, Resident Evil 2, Brood War, Quake II, Solitaire, Red Alert

INTERVIEW/EDITORIAL COORDINATOR

GAJ DECARLO

EMAIL → gaj@pcxl.com
CLONED FROM → The excess breast tissue of Salma Hayek
TOUCHING STAR WARS MEMORY → "That was one of those stupid soft-films movies, wasn't it?"
DISCONCERTING FETISH → Whenever she gets near a 3D accelerator she loses all inhibition, begins to strip naked and perform exotic gyrations
NOW PLAYING → Sim City 3000

ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR

ERIC SMITH

EMAIL → erics@pcxl.com
CLONED FROM → The weird parts of Larry Flynt and Q's attachments folder
TOUCHING STAR WARS MEMORY → Chilled out women in gold bikinis
DISCONCERTING FETISH → Oddly enough, that'd be chilled out women in gold bikinis
NOW PLAYING → Thief, Tribes, with himself — if he doesn't start getting home earlier



CONTACTS

Caroline Simpson-Bint publisher

EDITORIAL

Mike Salmon editor in chief
 Rob Smith executive editor
 Phillip Mayard managing editor
 Dan Egger senior editor
 Hector Salazar senior editor
 Ed "Smash" Lee associate editor
 Chuck Osborn assistant editor

Contributing writers: Jason D'Aprile, Joel Durham, Chris Hujak, Steve Klett

ART

Kyle LeBouf art director
 Eric Smith assistant art director

Contributing designers: Gerry Serrano

ADVERTISING/MARKETING

Mike Rogers national sales manager, ext. 150
 Andy Swanson regional sales manager, ext. 749
 Erik "The Traitor" Piller marketing manager, ext. 146
 John Yeargin ad slave, ext. 103
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Richard Lesovoy production director
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CIRC-O-MATIC

Stephanie Flanagan subscription director
 Bruce Eldridge newstand director
 Thea Selby newsstand manager
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 Amy Hibbi direct mail manager
 Kristi Chezum fulfillment specialist
 Clara Pon direct marketing specialist
 Quyen Nguyen distribution marketing coordinator

PC ACCELERATOR

Editorial
 fax 415-468-4684
 fax 415-468-4686
 email letters@pcxl.com

Advertising
 fax 415-468-4686, ext. 150
 fax 415-468-4686
 email mrogers@pcxl.com



Chris Anderson CEO
 Tom Valentini vice president/CFO
 Holly Klingel vice president/circulation
 Charles Schug general counsel

IMAGINE ENTERTAINMENT DIVISION

Jonathan Simpson-Bint president
 (PC Accelerator, Games Business, PSM, Next Generation, Imagine Games Network, PC Gamer, The Dem: Daily Entertainment Network)

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We're in business, we love to have fun, and we have a cast from day always to deliver spectacular editorial value. This means doing whatever it takes to give you the information you need. With us back, we'll even make you smile sometimes.

Thanks for joining us.

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We'd like to thank our competitors for enlightening what we've been doing. Without your help (and your love) for this magazine we wouldn't be copying our page or we wouldn't have been recognized. We're not having any fun here, we're just really trying to thank you. We love you!

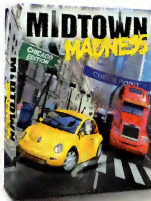
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Rob and Eric are not related, it's just an incredible coincidence that they share the same last name PC ACCELERATOR. May 1999



0-60 (off a skyscraper)? Yes.

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CARIBBEAN DISC

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, THE TOUGH GET DISC
GET OUT OF MY DISC, GET INTO MY HARD DRIVE

This month's guest artist is Billy Ocean. He floated out of our lives in the '80s and hasn't been heard from since, but here he is...

*Disc dashed by me in painted an sleeve
And all heads turned 'cus disc was the cream
I was in search of a good dema just runnin my game*

*Caribbean disc
Now we're sharing the same dream
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		TUROK 2
		HALF-LIFE
		REDLINE
		RECOIL
		UCW NITRO
		LANDER
		DESCENT 3
		WORMS: ARMAGEDDON
		THIEF
		TOMB RAIDER III
		BASEBALL 2000
		ROAD WARS

DISC

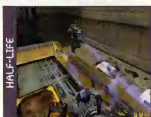
		TRIBES
		HALF-LIFE
		MYTH II
		THIEF
		SHADOWMAN
		TEST DRIVE 5
		VIPER RACING
		SIN
		DELTA FORCE
		RED ALERT
		MADDEN '99
		BLOOD II
		QUAKE II
		INDEPENDENT GAMES

Your disc comes with a scrolling interface, which is operated by moving the mouse over the screen. If this is too complicated, or you lack the motor skills, then the bar on the left can be used as well. Click left on the mouse to select films and click left again (on the image) to return to the previous scene. If you've ever mist-licked a game, then the rest should be clear as day.

REQUIREMENTS: WINDOWS 95/98, PENTIUM 133MHz, 32MB RAM, DIRECTX 5.0, MOUSE, 100% SOUND BLASTER COMPATIBLE CARD

THE DISC MINI-FAQ

- Q:** I want the discs, but I don't get them!
- A:** Did you pay for them? We aren't giving these things away you know. It costs money to get two discs full of games, patches, maps, and hidden gems. Now quit being cheap and call 800-333-3890 to order your double disc edition now!
- Q:** Did George Lucas really plan to have a prequel when he first did Star Wars?
- Rob:** Yes, he did. But I don't believe for a moment that he planned the whole Vader/Luke/Lia thing.
- Mike:** No, and anyone who says different is just a moron.
- Dan:** Of course he did. We had all nine movies planned from the beginning. (Mike: Stop)





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PC ACCELERATOR May 1999

Star Wars rumor #1 → During filming Mark Hamill dreamed he was replaced by Robbie Benson





Star Wars

EPISODE I

The games... the movies... the hype

It's going to be f_ucking huge

It's been 16 long years. We've had to endure political scandals, psychotic bombers, murdering tailbacks, *Rebellion*, the '80s, and six different Star Trek movies. *Return Of The Jedi* (and that damn Ewok song) last graced the big screen in 1983, and since then, our only link to the magical Star Wars universe has been through games. Now, some 16 years and 32 games later (some good, some bad), our prayers have been answered in the form of *Episode 1* – the movie and two, count 'em, two games.

When we first heard the news we were ecstatic. We racked our brains trying to figure out exactly what these mystery games would be. Maybe a new first-person shooter based on the *Jedi Knight* engine? Or maybe a new game (aside from *Alliance*) in the wildly popular X-Wing series? Nope. Instead LucasArts announced a racing game and an adventure game. WTF? A Star Wars racing game? What next, Star Wars Jawa Hunter 3D? Before passing judgement and damning LucasArts to eternal hell, we took the PCXL limo over to the Lucas Ranch to see exactly what kind of "crops" they are growing and apparently smoking. What we saw took us from intrigued, to interested, to a little bit hungry (it was lunchtime), and by the time it was all over, we were downright impressed.

The simultaneous release of the biggest movie in the history of movie-dom along with two games is unprecedented. On May 19th every single theater in the entire world will be sold out. People will quit their jobs and camp out months in advance just to get tickets, and some geeky rich guy will pay \$300 for one frickin' seat. Can the games possibly live up to the movie's hype? Can Aunt Beru kick a Rancor's ass? Do you have what it takes to be a stormtrooper? The answers, the insanity, and the information are straight ahead (uhh ... err ... to the right)

STAR WARS

EPISODE I

THE PHANTOM MENACE™



O riginally this game was titled *Star Wars Episode 1 Adventure* (another creative title, huh?), but it was changed because the game really isn't an adventure. Pigeonholing *Phantom Menace* into one genre is extremely difficult. It isn't an action game and it isn't really a platform game. It certainly isn't a 3D shooter and by no means is it an RPG. So what the hell kind of game is this?

Big Ape Productions producer Dean Sharpe puts it like this, "I guess it's a 'game of the movie' genre. It's not a bunch of different games, game. You are actually playing the movie." Uh, okay. But we haven't seen the movie, so what can we expect? "Like most Star Wars films, *Episode 1* starts off with big action sequences, then through the middle section there is much more story and character development. Of course, the ending is a big showdown. This all works perfectly for the game," added Sharpe.

The basic story (or as much as they would tell us) goes something like this: In *Episode I*, Luke Skywalker's father is just a hopeful nine-year-old boy named Anakin, who knows nothing of his eventual fate as a Dark Lord in years to come. In this earlier time, Obi-Wan Kenobi is a determined young Jedi Knight. Qui-Gon Jinn is Obi-Wan's venerable Jedi master, trying to teach the Jedi way to his apprentice, as their world begins to unravel in political turmoil. *Episode I* will take audiences through extraordinary realms and adventures, from the desert planet of Tatooine to the galactic capital world of Coruscant (with its Jedi Temple), the green world of Naboo, and beyond. Familiar Star Wars characters Yoda, R2-D2, C-3PO, and Jabba the Hutt are along for the ride. This first chapter fol-

lows young Anakin Skywalker's journey as he pursues his dreams and confronts his fears in the midst of a galaxy in crisis.

In the game, which closely follows the story of the movie, you essentially play as four different characters at different times: Obi-Wan Kenobi, Qui-Gon Jinn, Captain Panaka, Queen Amidala (Luke and Leia's mom/Anakin's bitch). Along the way you run into over 200 different polygonal Star Wars characters, some of which you fight, some you talk to, and some you run from. The different characters

▶ p. 20



Anyone notice how these "fearsome" Battle Droids look just like our very own Hector Salazar? Not very scary, and we hear they are pretty dumb as well.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → LucasArts
 PUBLISHER → Big Ape Productions
 RELEASE DATE → May 24th
 SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS → PC: 4, 128MB RAM (64MB RAM recommended), 4x CD-ROM, 3D acceleration required

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

A game that takes you through every scene of the biggest movie ever released — the hype will have no equal.

THE HURDLE

Games made up of different "mini-games" are notoriously awful and the strict deadline could mean rushjob.

THE HIT

If the action scenes can capture the drama and tension of those seen in the trailer then nothing else will matter.

STAR WARS GAMING — A HISTORY

Long before there were 3D accelerators or hi-res graphics, there were Star Wars games. And without this high-end technology, most of them looked like crap. Still, the early '80s were a simpler time when parachute pants, Duran Duran, and vector graphics seemed really cool. Surprisingly, it wasn't until after the release of the Star Trek arcade game in 1982 that the Star Wars destiny in video game history began to unfold. Here's the story...

STAR WARS: THE ARCADE GAME RELEASED → 1983
WHO → Atari
WHERE → Arcades everywhere
WHAT → The vector-based game that spanned a billion (ok, maybe less) ports. Blast away at THE Fighters. Fly across the Death Star, make a trench run for the exhaust vent, and then repeat. Hey, there were only three levels!
POWER OF THE FORCE → Strong — Combined video samples from the movie with enticing graphics, addictive gameplay, and the music.



SW '83:6, Gimp

STAR WARS: TAG (THE MANY PORTS) RELEASED → 1983
WHO → Atari
WHERE → Atari 2600, 5200, & ST, ColecoVision, Sinclair Spectrum, PC, Commodore 64 and Amiga
WHAT → George Lucas is clearly not a fool. Almost every console received a port. Mysteriously, the only vector-based console around, the Vectrex, was denied a version.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Wavering — None of the consoles



TESB for VCS

could reproduce the arcade's steering control and some (like the 2600) shouldn't have tried.

STAR WARS: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK RELEASED → 1983
WHO → Parker Brothers
WHERE → Atari 2600
WHAT → Snowspeeders (tiny pixel) versus AT-ATs (big, nasty, lumpy pixels).
POWER OF THE FORCE → Strong — With decent gameplay for a 2600 game, the graphics were a highpoint for the woefully underpowered VCS.

STAR WARS: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK RELEASED → 1983
WHO → Parker Brothers
WHERE → Intellivision
WHAT → Almost an exact port of the Atari 2600 version, this one lacked pastel hues and didn't improve on the graphics.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Mediocre — The only Star Wars game to grace the "Intelligent Television," it wasn't all that intelligent in the first place.
JEDI ARENA RELEASED → 1983
WHO → Parker Brothers
WHERE → Atari 2600

FIVE QUESTIONS

BIG APE'S PRODUCER ON THE PHANTOM MENACE GAME, DEAN SHARPE, ON THE UPS AND DOWNS OF WORKING IN SECRET

Q: What was the biggest challenge or obstacle in doing a game so shrouded in secrecy?

A: Exactly that. Working on the game before the movie is done and keeping the whole thing quiet was a great challenge. You can't talk about it with peers, and you can't bounce ideas off of buddies in the industry.

Q: Could you tell your loved ones, or were lives threatened?

A: Couldn't tell anybody. My girlfriend actually works at LucasArts and I couldn't tell her. She got really pissed off, and finally I got her to sign a non-disclosure so I could talk about it. She was like, "We sleep together but I can't see any of your stupid game."

Q: Any hidden codes to make the Samuel Jackson character say lines like, "Use the force motherf---ker!"?

A: Not a good idea. One of the bummers is you can't do the type of things you could do if the game weren't attached to such a huge license.

Q: What is your favorite Star Wars game, and why?

A: Probably would have to be *Dark Forces*. It was one of the first times someone made a real game out of 3D, rather than just running around and blowing shit up. *Doom* wouldn't be shit if it were flat. Cool for network and the fact it was 3D, but the single-player game wasn't much.

Q: What kind of weapons? Will there be ones not in the movie?

A: We did what we could in the Star Wars universe, but there won't be a flaming spike ball. However some cool weapons from the movies like *Darth Vader's* will be there.



Chopping up Battle Droids into little pieces will be a big part of the game.



Scaling difficulty means the game gets tougher or easier depending on your skill.

TEN REASONS...

10 REASONS EPISODE I WILL BLOW

- 1) **BABY VADER** → Has anyone else seen Jake Lloyd in *Jingle All The Way*?
- 2) **BATTLE DROIDS** → Dumb as Stormtroopers and about as frightening as Ewoks
- 3) **NO MILLENNIUM FALCON** → Overall, uninspired ship design. Everything looks like it's from Cloud City
- 4) **THE MUPPET FACTOR** → Jedi was just a bunch of Muppets, and CG Muppets are still Muppets
- 5) **THE JAMAICAN TALKIN' JAR-JAR** → "Can you ah say I'ma gonna suckka"
- 6) **TOO CLEAN** → Part of the original's appeal was the worn, realistic look. That is gone
- 7) **QUEEN AMIDALA'S MONOTONE DIALOG** → Maybe she can't move her face too much because of all that pancake makeup
- 8) **MIDGETS** → If there's one thing we've learned from watching *SW*, it's that George Lucas has an unhealthy obsession with little people. Enough is enough
- 9) **TOO MUCH RELIANCE ON CG** → The models are underrated, they have a weight and tangibility CG can't match
- 10) **SUPER GROVER** → er Yoda... sounds like Frank Oz forgot how to do Yoda's voice

10 REASONS EPISODE I WILL RULE

- 1) It's Star Wars, Duh!
- 2) **2000 FX SHOTS** → An all time record
- 3) **DARTH MAUL** → Gotta love the dual-bladed lightsaber
- 4) **GRATUITOUS USE OF SAMUEL JACKSON IN A SUPPORTING ROLE** → Now he needs to say "Feel the Force, motherf---er"
- 5) **GRATUITOUS VIOLENCE** → The fact that the villains are mostly droids means they can get chopped to bits with lightsabers
- 6) **NO LUKE!** → Means no whining—oh wait, there's his Dad aka Baby Vader
- 7) **Pre-Genetic Jedis**
- 8) **LARGE SCALE BATTLES** → Tanks, and we hope the AT-ATs make a dazzling appearance
- 9) **THE EMPEROR** → A great villain gets his due in *Star Wars*
- 10) **Giant Killer See Bass With Lasers On Their Frickin' Heads** → so we hear

WHAT → An overhead-view lightsaber fight. At least the box says so. Could also be bats, pipes, or dawning Ron Jeremys.

POWER OF THE FORCE → Mediocre → Atari 2600 was obsolete and unable to do a game like this justice.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK: THE ARCADE GAME RELEASED → 1984

WHO → Atari

WHERE → A few arcades

WHAT → A chipset upgrade to the original Star Wars arcade game, it featured the same vector graphics in scenarios taken from *ESB*. Had four levels instead

of *SW: TAG's* three.

POWER OF THE FORCE → Strong, but waning → By '94, vector graphics were quaint. Few arcade owners bought the upgrade, making this game very rare.

RETURN OF THE JEDI: DEATH STAR BATTLE RELEASED → 1984

WHO → Parker Brothers

WHERE → Atari 2600

and 5200

WHAT → Another 2D shooter with the Star Wars license thrown on top. Pilot the Millennium Falcon in an effort to

destroy the new Death

Star.

WHY → Parker Brothers

WHO → Parker Brothers

WHERE → Atari 2600

WHAT → By this time, it was obvious that Parker Brothers just didn't care anymore. It was something to do with Ewoks,

Star. Whee.

POWER OF THE FORCE → Weak

→ There was little force left in

either the 2600 or 5200

to sell this game, which

wasn't very good any-

way.

RETURN OF THE JEDI: EVOK ADVENTURE RELEASED → Never

released → Atari 2600

WHO → Atari and Donark

WHERE → Atari ST, Sinclair

Spectrum

WHAT → In the vacuum of the non-existent game industry of 1985, only two computers

received ports (both ST and

Endor, and trees.

POWER OF THE FORCE → Bottom of Dugobah swamp

→ The bottom had completely fallen out of the console market by late 1984, leaving this game unsold.



Evok Adventure



Death Star Battle



Return of the Jedi: The Arcade Game

Spectrum sales were buoyant in the UK.

POWER OF THE FORCE → Weak

→ Nobody in the U.S. bought

either computer, so nobody really

care much.

RETURN OF THE JEDI: THE ARCADE GAME RELEASED → 1985

WHO → Atari

WHERE → The mall

WHAT → Isometric view blaster

with four scenes: Speed bikes in

the forest, Millennium Falcon vs

will be joined by a variety of AI partners. For example, when playing as the Queen, three or four members of the Royal Guard will follow along with you at points. In another scene you have to follow Anakin through a junk yard, all the while performing platform game-type jumps in search of a part, which lets you move on to the next event. There will be dialogue, lightsaber battles, shoot-outs, puzzles, and a whole load of stuff they couldn't tell us about. Battle Droids, Destroyer Droids, Sand People, Darth Maul, Assassins, and various other surprise Imperial scum will try to get in your way and provide plenty of action.

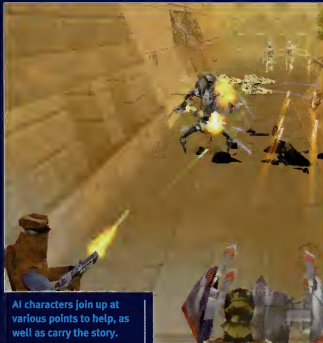
The game uses both a top-down and isometric view, which allows you to see some of the incredible animations of the characters and enemies. The camera does pull in close for dialogue, certain puzzles, and scripted sequences.

At PCXL we were really looking forward to a first-person shooter, but Sharpe explained (logically) the reasons behind the camera choice. "I don't think you can make a game in first-person that allows you to do a lot of things. It forces you to do only certain things, like shoot. You can't tell where you are in the world and hand-to-hand combat doesn't really work. Puzzles are also hard to pull off in first-person." The camera was set in a position to make the game playable through all the various parts, and but it doesn't let you get up close and personal.

One of the biggest challenges and concerns for developers of *The Phantom Menace* is tuning the game so the mass-market can play it and the hardcore gamer will love it — an unenviable task at best. The controls and interface will be incredibly simple. For example,



History says that Battle Droids' aim won't be this good in the movie.



AI characters join up at various points to help, as well as carry the story.

DIARY OF A DEATH STAR ENGINEER

Day 1 → I really love this new job. Great benefits, good pay, and how many people can say that their job involves vaporizing planets with a giant death ray? I can't wait to destroy my first planet.

Day 2 → I brought up to my superior officer what I thought was a slight oversight in the plans of the Death Star. It seems there's an exhaust port that leads right to the central power core of the station, and this port is accessible from the surface. And also — this is the Kicker — the port can't be closed. There's no lid. So here's this direct route to the power core that someone could say, drop a penny into and blow up the entire station. Um, does this strike anyone else as maybe just a slight design flaw? So I guess they decided to build a trench or something to put it in. So in essence, leading people right to it? You'd think that this kind of questioning would be welcomed by the people who run this place, but oh no. You shoulda seen my boss flip out and threaten to tell Lord Vader, blah blah blah. Oh well, I'm sure nothing will come of it.

Day 20 → It was a good day. Had a good lunch, stuffed wompats. Told a funny joke, that was a winner. Oh, and I blew up Alderaan, nice satisfying explosion. Debris everywhere. Maybe I'll rent a movie tonight.

Day 33 → Still no lid on that exhaust port.

Day 47 → Everyone over here's been talking about the Rebels. Seems there's this hidden base around here somewhere, and they've been throwing these little ships at us. What do they call 'em, Z wings?

Day 442 → Wow, it's been a while since my last entry. Well to recap real quick, I almost lost my job when those stupid Rebels blew up the Death Star! Can you believe it? It's a good thing I just happened to be on vacation at the time. Now, back to work on the brand new, top secret Death Star 2.

Day 449 → Well it seems there's another potential flaw in the design that no one has noticed, apparently. There's a central reactor as before, but this time there's a trench leading right to it from the surface that a saucer shaped ship could fly through. This seems bad to me, but it appears I'm alone on this one. Considering what happened last time, I feel I should bring this up with Lord Vader.

This was the last entry.

STAR WARS GAMING — A HISTORY

Soul Walkers, Death Star attack, and destroy the reactor.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Weak
WHERE → Vercor graphics and 3D perspective didn't help this game at the arcade... mainly because arcades were vacant in 1985.

RETURN OF THE JEDI. TAG (THE PORT)
RELEASED → 1985
WHO → Domark
WHERE → Sinclair Spectrum
WHAT → See *The Empire Strikes Back*: TAG
POWER OF THE FORCE → See *The Empire Strikes Back*: TAG

STAR WARS
RELEASED → 1991
WHO → JVC
WHERE → NES
WHAT → A short, stubby Luke jumps and shoots, just like every other licensed character on the NES.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Weak
— Only notable because this was the first game in which the player controlled a character from the movie.



STAR WARS
RELEASED → 1992, 1993
WHO → Capcom, U.S. Gold
WHERE → Gameboy, Game Gear
WHAT → A port of the NES game, but now Luke

is shorter, stubbier, and monochrom. H.aring the Star Wars them: played on the Gameboy speaker is exquisite torture.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Growing — Handhelds are a good home for simplistic run and jump games.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
RELEASED → 1992
WHO → JVC
WHERE → NES
WHAT → If Luke wasn't riding a Tauntaun in the first scene, we wouldn't even notice this was a different game than the NES Star Wars.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Weak
— Control, control... platform games must learn control.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
RELEASED → 1992
WHO → Capcom, U.S. Gold

WHERE → Game-boy, Game Gear
WHAT → Just like the *Star Wars* game, but following scenes from ESB (Doh!).

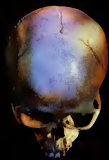
POWER OF THE FORCE → Holding — The Gameboy is the 171 console that keeps on going: the Game Gear isn't.

REBEL ASSAULT
RELEASED → 1992
WHO → LucasArts
WHERE → PC, 3DO, Sega CD, CD-I, Mac
WHAT → An FMV rail shooter that featured the first new Star Wars

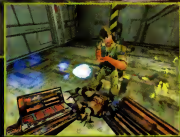
footage filmed since ROTJ.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Schizoid — Weak, because the game was so bad. Powerful, because it sold almost as many CD-ROM drives as Myst.

SUPER STAR WARS
RELEASED → 1992
WHO → JVC
WHERE → SNES
WHAT → More platform fun, but Luke and the gang are no longer squat and ugly. They're also jumping floss. Funny how Luke did one flipping jump in ESB and suddenly entire games are based on it.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Midding — Better than the NES Star Wars, but still an uninspired use of the license.

**THE DEADLIEST CREATURES
IN THE UNIVERSE ARE ABOUT TO
MEET THEIR MATCH...**



EACH



ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR

- **SCALE WALLS** and elevator shafts as an Alien and advance with frightening speed as you attack to devour your opponents.
- **STALK YOUR PREY** as the deadly Predator using wrist blades, shoulder cannons and invisibility as you surprise attack your enemies.
- **LOCK AND LOAD** as a Marine using motion trackers, pulse rifles and flame-throwers to eradicate these vile creatures.

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OTHER.



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— *Computer Gaming World*

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— *PC Accelerator*

"Is there anyone that doesn't want to play this one?"

— *PC Gamer*



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light saber blocking is on the same button as attack. The whole game will be controlled with two buttons and a directional pad (or keypad). When we heard this we became scared that the game was going to be nothing more than button-mashing and pretty animations; we were thinking "Final Fight with dialog." Sharpe was quick to ease our fears, "I remember *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, I went through the entire game pressing right and pumping the attack button. We won't put out a game like that. Also you have to keep in mind that action is only one part of this game."

Because the game is so closely based on the movie and the developers were unable to share much information, it is really hard to get a fair reading on what the game will be like. Even the developers admit that there isn't anything new or revolutionary in gameplay terms, instead they claim that it's the fashion in which the different game types are delivered that make it compelling. Big Ape is quick to point out that *Phantom Menace* won't be one of those three-games-in-one travesties. The key is the seamless transfer from dialog straight into fights, then a quick puzzle. Whether they can pull this off is still in question.

We are cautiously excited about the prospect of a "game of the movie," but the simplistic controls, story-driven gameplay to which we already know the end (or at least we will on May 19th, God-willing), and our general fear of the unknown is a concern. That said, if we didn't get the game for free we'd still buy it the first day it was released — damn you, Lucas!



The special effects and engine look solid, if unspectacular.



"Hello my queen. When exactly are you "legal," if you know what I mean?"

STAR WARS GAMING — A HISTORY

SUPER EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
RELEASED → 1993
WHO → JVC
WHERE → SNES
WHAT → Continues the same "Super" SNES formula.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Powerful — Even being a platform game, this was the best Star Wars game released up to this point.



STAR WARS CHESS
RELEASED → 1993
WHO → The Software Tool-works
WHERE → PC, Sega CD and 3DO
WHAT → Exactly what you would expect, battle chess with

Star Wars characters.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Mediocre — Slow animations and an average AI makes this play like a looting game: between Chewbacca and Wicket.

X-WING
RELEASED → 1993
WHO → LucasArts
WHERE → PC
WHAT → One of the finest space combat sims ever released. The Imperial Pursuit and B-Wing expansion packs extended its appeal.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Strong — This game began a long winning streak for LucasArts and its use of the Star Wars license.

SUPER RETURN OF THE JEDI
RELEASED → 1994
WHO → JVC
WHERE → SNES
WHAT → You know the drill by now. Adds Leia and Wicket as playable characters, which makes the final battle with the Emperor even more confusing.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Steady — The SNES series was in high swing now, although this game wasn't quite as good as ES8.



STAR WARS: THE ARCADE GAME
RELEASED → 1994
WHO → Sega
WHERE → Sega 32x

WHAT → Bigger, better, and prettier ... it's still just a part of an 11 year-old game. Easier than designing a whole new game, right?
POWER OF THE FORCE → Weak — The sole reason for this game was to sell 32x units ... and it failed miserably.

X-WING CD-ROM COLLECTOR'S EDITION
RELEASED → 1994
WHO → LucasArts
WHERE → PC
WHAT → The original X-Wing game and add-on packs with improved graphics and voice-overs on one CD.

POWER OF THE FORCE → Strong — Offered enough improvements to warrant a new purchase.

THE FIGHTER
RELEASED → 1994
WHO → LucasArts
WHERE → PC
WHAT → For those tired of being a goody-goody Rebel, allowed players a chance on the Dark Side. *Defenders of the Empire* mission pack followed.

POWER OF THE FORCE → Powerful — Even better than X-Wing and the first game to offer players a chance to play for the Empire.



THE GROSSEST MOVIE KISS OF ALL TIME

Okay, we didn't notice it the first time around, but when we finally saw the *Star Wars Special Edition*, and it was very clear that the movie contained the grossest kiss of all time. By the time we saw this special

edition we understood the sibling relationship between Luke and Leia, and we knew the consequences of their tonsil hockey.

Despite the sheer repulsiveness of that scene,

it seems that *Star Wars* may be ready to step back across the line of relations that dare not speak its name. In a close examination of the second *Episode One* trailer, we ran

across a scene that left us worried that things could get even worse. The scene in question involves a hug between Anakin and his mother, where the mother

parts her lips and quite possibly kisses the future Vader on the ear. None of us has seen the movie yet, so check out this picture and you be the judge.



Secretly love!



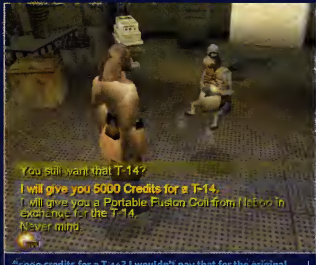
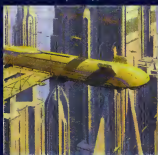
Wow, mom, that's gross!



This RS unit had a bad motivator way back in *Episode 1* as well.



Looks more like a drug-induced scene from *Alice In Wonderland*.



You still want that T-14?
I will give you 6000 Credits for a T-14.
I will give you a Portable Fusion Coil from I-130 in exchange for the T-14.
Never mind.

"6000 credits for a T-14? I wouldn't pay that for the original Jawa doll with the plastic cape - uh, on second thought."

STAR WARS GAMING — A HISTORY

SUPER RETURN OF THE JEDI

RELEASED → 1995

WHO → THQ

WHERE → GameBoy, Game Gear

WHAT → It's not exactly "super" but it sure beats the earlier handheld *Star Wars* games. This is a part of the SNES version.

POWER OF THE FORCE → Strong — Innovation? What a concept.

DARK FORCES

RELEASED → 1995

WHO → LucasArts

WHERE → PC, Playstation

WHAT → In a nutshell, *Star Wars* meets Doom. Introduces new character, Kyle Katarn.

POWER OF THE FORCE → Powerful — Shooting stormtroopers in first-person was the ultimate way

to lose yourself in *Star Wars* mythology.

REBEL ASSAULT II

RELEASED → 1995

WHO → LucasArts

WHERE → PC, PlayStation

WHAT → The FMV curtsies continue. Although the video is better, the gameplay is still railied and atrocious.

POWER OF THE FORCE → Lame

— The word on crappy FMV games was out. Not even the license could save it from a critics' mauling.

THE FIGHTER CO-ORDINATOR

RELEASED → 1995

WHO → LucasArts



Rebel Assault II

WHERE → PC

WHAT → Adds voices, better graphics, and mission pack to the original, all on one CD.

POWER OF THE FORCE → Awesome —

The best *Star Wars* space combat game ever made.

YODA STORIES

DESKTOP ADVENTURES

RELEASED → 1997

WHO → LucasArts

WHERE → PC

WHAT → Designed for short diversions, gameplay is purposefully simplistic. As Luke, you

become Yoda's personal go-fer. Will be right at home on the Gameboy.



SW Monopoly

POWER OF THE FORCE → Weak

— Okay for kiddies, but adults would rather amuse themselves with a game of *Dark Forces* for an hour instead of this pointless trife.

STAR WARS MONOPOLY

RELEASED → 1997

WHO → Hasbro Interactive

WHERE → PC

WHAT → A standard

game of Monopoly with — you guessed it — *Star Wars* characters.

POWER OF THE FORCE → Fair —

The game itself is not bad, but Anthony Daniel's



Jedi Knight

constant commentary may drive you to the brink of madness.

JEDI KNIGHT: DARK FORCES II

RELEASED → 1997

WHO → LucasArts

WHERE → PC

WHAT → *Star Wars* meets Quake. Introduces

FMV cut scenes, force powers, and lightsabers

in combat. *Mysteries Of The Sith* was the add-on.

POWER OF THE FORCE → Awesome —

Fantastic level design brought out the scope of the universes, and the

force powers gave an RPG character development slant that

sucked you in to the end.

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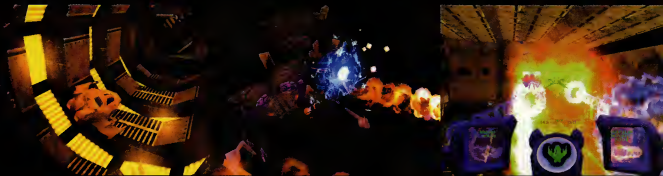
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DESC

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STAR WARS EPISODE I RACER

Star Wars Episode 1 Racer, as it is so cleverly named, is based on a five-minute Podrace sequence in the movie where young Anakin Skywalker races against various freaky computer-animated characters with names like Sebulba and Babaloo (okay, that last one is made up). Wanting to get to the bottom of this busi-

ness, we asked the game's project leader Jon Knoles how he planned to make a racing game that can effectively carry that Star Wars mystique and story? "We could have designed the game to mimic Anakin's journey in the film, but it would have been a one- or two-race course game with only one vehicle. What fun would that be for a gamer that likes racing games? So instead we designed a rich, immersive 3D user interface where players can interact with characters and experience situations one might find in an adventure game, but without the side story and puzzles that don't belong in a racing game — not in this game, anyway." Instead of a direct movie focus, the developers have chosen to take a small portion of the movie and expanded upon it in *EP 1 Racer*.

The game features over 20 different Podracers, each piloted by a different character from the movie. A Podracer is basically made up of two jet engines that drag along a pod (kind of like a Jump seat), although there are many variations of this basic design. The vehicles hover above the ground using Repulsorlifts (antigravity devices making it possible for any machine to float slightly above the ground). The handling of the vehicles is very similar to those in

Wipeout, and even the early build we played felt extremely smooth. In order to add the depth and replayability necessary in a racing game there are 42 different upgradeable parts, which augment the Podracer's performance in acceleration, air-braking, steering, cooling, maximum speed, repair systems, and Repulsorlift grip. Add this depth to John Williams' epic score from the movie, and a wide variety in vehicles, and *EP 1 Racer* looks to be much more than just another racing game.

However, the most exciting aspect of the game is the variety, chal-



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → LucasArts
PUBLISHER → LucasArts
RELEASE DATE → May 1999
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS → PC64, 32MB RAM (48MB RAM recommended), CD-ROM, 3D acceleration required

INTEREST GAUGE

WORTHLESS FARTED AMAZING

THE HYPE

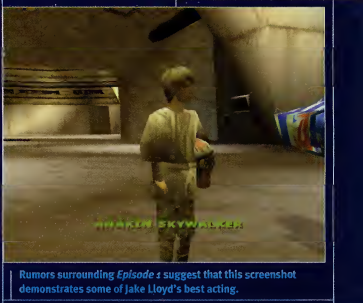
Fans of the movie got to pilot the same Podracer that Anakin Skywalker makes famous on the big screen.

THE HURDLE

There are already too many futuristic racers on the shelves, and none of them have offered a worthwhile experience.

THE HIT

Yes, the license is going to be enough. *Episode 1* is going to create a whirlwind of hype beyond belief.



Rumors surrounding *Episode 1* suggest that this screenshot demonstrates some of Jake Lloyd's best acting.

STAR WARS GAMING — A HISTORY

MASTERS OF TERAS KASI

WHO → LucasArts
WHERE → Playstation
WHAT → A 3D fighting game (?) with the contrived premise that the characters battle each other for training purposes.

POWER OF THE FORCE → Weak — Poor control and silly story doomed its chances. Also known as *Masters Of Total Krp*.

SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE

RELEASED → 1997
WHO → LucasArts
WHERE → N64, PC
WHAT → A mish-mash of space sim, first-person adventure, and rail shoot-

er. The first level on Goth was the best part of the game.
POWER OF THE FORCE → **Mediocre** — Sold well, but it was disappointing that the later levels did not match the quality of the first.

X-WING VS THE FIGHTER

RELEASED → 1998
WHO → LucasArts
WHERE → PC
WHAT → Finally added



Masters of TK

much-needed multi-player support and better graphics to the space combat of *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter*, but skimped on the single-player levels. An expansion pack,

Balance Of Power, tries to cure all that.

POWER OF THE FORCE → **Mediocre** — Multiplayer games are slow and gameplay is not an improvement on *TIE Fighter*.



REBELLION

RELEASED → 1998
WHO → LucasArts
WHERE → PC
WHAT → Star Wars meets *StarCraft*, but gets roughed up a little

in the process.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Weak — A Star Wars turn- and real-time-based strategy game is a good concept, but is ruined by a clunky interface and plodding gameplay.

STAR WARS DROIDWORKS

RELEASED → 1998
WHO → LucasArts
WHERE → PC
WHAT → An adulation title in which the player can create droids and send them on missions.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Weak — Educational games are an oxymoron. Public more excited by new prequel movies than managing unguided robots.

ROGUE SQUADRON

RELEASED → 1998
WHO → LucasArts
WHERE → N64, PC
WHAT → LucasArts listened to the critics of *Shadows of the Empire* and created a game



Rogue Squadron

based entirely on arcade space combat.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Firm — Beautiful, but dimwitted. *RS* is a fluffy action-focused treat before the release of *X-Wing Alliance*.

STAR WARS TRILOGY

RELEASED → 1998
WHO → Sega
WHERE → Arcades
WHAT → A rail shooter that combines first-person, space combat, and a light saber duel with Darth Vader himself.
POWER OF THE FORCE → Weak — Hey, it's a rail shooter ... what the hell is up with that? Wampas look like polygonal snowmen.



Podracers are nothing more than a futuristic drag race and more proof that Star Wars is really just *American Graffiti* in space.

lenge, and depth of the courses. Of the 20+ tracks, three are taken directly from the movie, while the rest were created by the development team and based on the different planets in the Star Wars universe. Every course is loaded with multiple paths, branching roads, and shortcuts. What's even more intriguing is how some of these shortcuts can be accessed by player-triggered events. For example, in one course you (or an AI player) can set off a switch which will then open up a new shortcut for the next lap. Another key ingredient to bringing the different courses to life is through scripted events and obstacles.

One track will feature a quake where the earth opens up, causing players to adjust on the fly. Another example sees a course based around an active volcano, and when it erupts, it completely changes how you race the track. There are also three tracks that take place in an asteroid prison's mining colony. The mine uses zero-gravity vacuum tunnels to transport ore and the Podracers get sucked into these tunnels at insane speeds with no gravity, all the while dodging the giant rocks. The pure adrenaline rush of racing through a tunnel with no gravity and zipping past tumbling rocks is an amazing prospect.



Binder beams connect the two engines and will likely fry a villain in the movie.

THEY'RE NOT DOLLS, THEY'RE ACTION FIGURES

Just so you know how much money you lost when your mom convinced you to throw out your Star Wars toys or give them away to little cousin Jimmy (who promptly threw them all in the blender and set it to "frappe").

The first number is the price of the item in mint condition, that is, still in its original packaging. The second is the price of the toy in a worn or "loose" state. And yes, it refers to U.S. dollars.

FIGURES

Jawa: Cloth cape → 175/15
 Plastic cape → 2500/275
 Luke with original lightsaber → 1000/175
 Boba Fett → 700/50
 Obi-Wan → 200/15
 Leia → 285/35
 Chewbacca → 200/50
 R2-D2 → 150/14
 Stormtrooper → 225/15
 Han → 575/25
 Vader → 200/15

R5-D4 → 125/10 (no respect!)
 C-3PO → 150/12
 Yoda → Orange Snake → 60/20
 Brown Snake → 500/25
 Sandperson → 225/15
 Greedo → 150/50
 Hammerhead → 140/50
 Walrus Man → 125/10

VEHICLES

A-Wing → 625/300
 AT-AT → 250/125
 Cantina Playset → 600/300
 Cloud Car → 75/35
 Cloud City Playset → 375/150
 Dagobah Playset → 60/20
 Vader's TIE → 120/60
 Imperial Shuttle → 350/150
 Jawa Sandcrawler → 625/225
 Landspeeder → 75/25
 Ewok Village → 80/35
 Millennium Falcon → 350/75

Patrol Dewback → 50/20
 Rancor → 75/35
 Scout Walker → 85/30
 Slave → 100/45
 Snowspeeder → 85/45
 Speeder Bike → 35/15
 Star Destroyer → 150/40
 Tatooine Skiff → 650/300
 Tauntaun → 60/20
 TIE Fighter → 125/45
 TIE Interceptor → 100/55
 X-Wing → 125/45
 Y-Wing → 125/60



R2-D2

Boba Fett

C-3PO

Chewbacca

Han Solo

Stormtrooper

Farm Boy Luke

R5-D4

Greedo

So how is *EP 1 Racer* going to stand out from the ever-crowded field of futuristic racing games? Knoles had this to say, "We play a lot of games, and a lot of racing games. All of us on the team wanted to see certain things implemented which would make *Episode 1 Racer* stand out from all the rest, besides simply having the Star Wars name. The game gives a great feeling of reckless speed, yet tight control. The worlds are packed with a great deal of detail, from animated mining machines to giant Sea Killer fish, and the courses have an incredible variety of open areas and tight corridors that make for races chock full of strategy, action, and speed."

The races will feature eight Podracers, which can all be human controlled in multiplayer. On it's own, *EP 1 Racer* is an extremely exciting product. The value of the license is in the overall sense of being part of that wonderful and familiar environment, and after seeing the movie, what Star Wars fanatic in their right mind wouldn't want to give one of these futuristic go-carts a little spin?



FIVE QUESTIONS

STAR WARS DISCO, DRUG SCREENINGS, AND AN INSIDE LOOK AT LUCASCARTS, WITH PROJECT LEADER JON KNOLES

Q: What kind of music: All from the film or techno muzak a la *Wipeout*?

A: Meco's "Disco Star Wars" and other Galactic Funk (just kidding). Our game will contain the real John Williams Star Wars music from *The Phantom Menace*.

Q: What is your favorite part of the game?

A: Screaming insults in Huttese as other racers as you blast past them in a haze of dust and vapor fumes is what keeps me laughing long after I go home (which is rare at the end of a project). But at these speeds, you can catch a whole lot of sandflies in your mouth that way ...

Q: What is your favorite Star Wars moment?

A: When Han Solo replies to Princess Leia's heartfelt, "I love you" with his own heartfelt, "I know."

Q: How many people were allowed to work on the game? Were there drug screenings, FBI investigations, brainwashing?

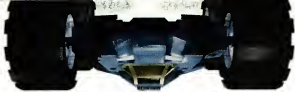
A: There were an average of about a dozen people on the project and this probably peaked at 24, or so. Everyone did an excellent job of keeping things close to the vest on this project. Everyone respects LucasFilms' desire that as little *Episode 1* information gets out as possible until people can experience the movie as George Lucas wants them to.

Q: What is your favorite Star Wars game, and why?

A: My favorite Star Wars game is *TIE Fighter*. It was such a thrill to have worked on that game. It was a great joy to be Darth Vader's wingman and blast those pesky Luke Skywalker wannabes into space dust. It appealed to my darker side.

YODA: FROM CRADLE TO GRAVE: A VISUAL HISTORY OF EVERYONE'S FAVORITE GREEN JEDI



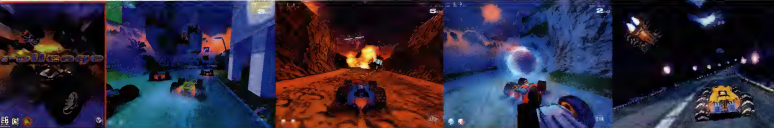


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STAR WARS BATTLE ROYALE



None of this *Masters of the Teras Kasi* training nonsense, you want to know who would really win in a fight between all the Star Wars characters, right? Now we'll see who really has the Force.

FIRST ROUND

DARTH VADER vs. DEATH STAR DROID
After hours of exasperating chasing, Vader tells the droid "I am your father," before chopping off its hand and pushing it out of a window.

LEIA vs. STORMTROOPER
Stormtrooper fires 16 shots while Leia stands two feet away with her back turned. Leia does a back flip, shoots (with-out looking) and kills the trooper with a single shot.

FARM BOY LUKE vs. SAND PERSON
No Obi-Wan to save you this time whiny boy! Now prepare yourself to be this Sand Person's bitch.

YODA vs. MOFF TARKIN
While Yoda pulls a random spaceship from the swamp, Moff gives the order "shoot that freaky green thing," and obliterates Dagobah with the Death Star death ray.

LANDO vs. GUARD
Once again, a movie precedent: Lando tosses the piggy policeman into the nearest Sarlac pit to digest slowly over a thousand years.

BOBA FETT vs. C-3PO
C'mon it's Boba Fett vs. C-3PO — quite possibly the nastiest gambist robot in the history of sci fi.

ADM. ACKBAR vs. GARBAGE MONSTER
Although Ackbar's background is unclear we're pretty sure he could pull an Aquaman and convince the garbage monster to chill.

JEDI LUKE vs. JAWA
Jedi Luke's still pissed that the Jawa tried to sell Farmboy Luke the faulty droid R5 D4. Now he's back with a vengeance.

OBJI-WAN vs. SALACIOUS CRUMB
Despite Salacious Crumb's attempt to eat Obi-Wan's Kenobis, the Jedi master dispatches him with a swift lightsaber swipe.

GREEDO vs. PORKINS
Before the special edition it would have been Greedo with an easy win. But the new "worse alien than a stormtrooper" Greedo can't even hit the broad side of a Bantha.

HAN SOLO vs. MAX REBO
Max plays a snappy synth number moments before Han Solo stops the music with a single blaster shot.

AUNT BERU vs. RANCOR MONSTER
In the toumey's biggest upset, Aunt Beru nags the Rancor monster to death. "Make sure they speak bocc!" C'mon, you didn't

really think Uncle Owen was killed by stormtroopers, did you?

IG-88 vs. R2 D2
R2 infuriates the bounty hunter IG-88 with taunts until he blows a circuit. "Dee-doo-dee-doo. Your mother sleeps with Jawas"

CHEWY vs. R5-D4
Chewy prepares to fight R5-D4, but before the battle begins, the droid's motivator blows. Making for Chewy because this robot was capable of making the entire Star Wars universe "his bitch."

WEDGE vs. JABBA
Wedge tries to destroy Jabba's North Tower with his X-Wing, only to find Jabba has no North Tower, and Wedge has no X-Wing. Jabba proceeds to sit on him, and then eat a doughnut.

WICKETT THE EWOK vs. THE EMPEROR
Emperor: Take the stick... strike me down, and your journey to the Dark Side will be complete.
Wickett: Yub, yub.
Emperor: Now, young Ewok, you will die. Zap.

SWEET SIXTEEN

DARTH VADER vs. LEIA
Leia, I am your father... but nonetheless, I don't mind using this torture droid on you.

SAND PERSON vs. MOFF TARKIN
Because of overconfidence, Tarkin ditches the Death Star. Unable to utter the phrase

"You have disappointed me for the last time," the Sand Person screams "ooooooooaaaa" and rips his face off.

LANDO vs. BOBA FETT
Lando tries to wheel and deal his way out of the fight, while Boba launches a missile into Lando's cranium. Battle decided.

ADM. ACKBAR vs. JEDI LUKE
Two seconds it's over... The Mon Calamari is now a delicious fried appetizer.

OBJI-WAN vs. PORKINS
Old Ben distracts Porkins with a Jedi mind trick involving microwave burritos before slicing him with the lightsaber.

HAN SOLO vs. AUNT BERU
Aunt Beru shoots first but amazingly misses at point blank range and (thanks to George Lucas and his special edition editing) Han returns fire and ends battle.

CHEWY vs. R2 D2
After losing a chess match, Chewy tries to rig R2's arms off and is unsuccessful. Frustrated, Chewy rips R2-D2's head off and uses his body as a port-a-Wookiee-pottie.

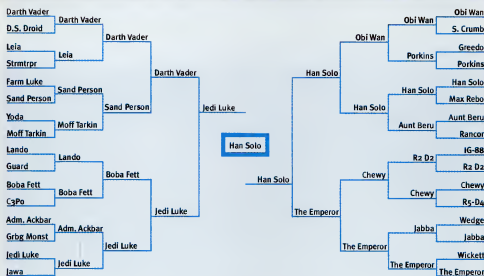
JABBA vs. EMPEROR
Jabba: Mind tricks won't work on me, Jedi.
Emperor: Really? Zap.

ELITE EIGHT

DARTH VADER vs. SAND PERSON
Vader: Join me and we'll rule the galaxy as father and Sand Person.
Sandperson: Arrrgrrrrrg.
Vader: Oh, screw it all. Zap.

BOBA FETT vs. JEDI LUKE
After hours of the best action fight in the tournament, Boba Fett dies of a pointless slapstick mishap. (See ROTJ for example)

STAR WARS: THE LAST MAN, ER, THING STANDING



STORMTROOPER APPLICATION



Please answer all questions to the best of your ability. At the end of the test, you will be asked to turn in your form to the Imperial Recruitment Officer. You have 30 minutes. Good luck, and long live the Emperor. Cheaters will be vaporized.



1. What is your height? _____
Weight? _____

(note: If the answers are not "6'3" and "185 lbs" turn your test in now. One size does not fit all)

2. At what range can you hit a barn with a blaster rifle?

- a) 100 feet
- b) 75 feet
- c) 25 feet
- d) 2 inches
- e) A good 50 feet if I throw it hard enough

3. If you were to hear a strange noise while guarding the highest security shield facility of the Empire's command station, you would:

- a) Immediately become suspicious that a Jedi Knight was attempting to distract you
- b) Become more vigilant
- c) Report it to your commanding officer
- d) Yell "Is anyone there?"
- e) Turn and look to see what it was, but not actually physically move over, then dismiss it as nothing

4. What is the proper way to open a blast door sealed by Rebels?

- a) Huddle around it and wait for it to open
- b) Bump into it, go the other way
- c) Shoot it, even though the shot will bounce right back at you
- d) Ask the Rebels if they'd like fries with that
- e) Go get the manager
- f) Realize it's not your manager, it's your superior officer
- g) All of the above



5. The best way to chase escaping Rebels down a hallway is to:

- a) Run in single file
- b) Run in single file, while firing blindly ahead
- c) Run in single file, while firing blindly ahead and hitting your teammates who are running in the opposite direction
- d) Run in single file, while firing blindly ahead and hitting your teammates, then falling into a pit "cause you couldn't see
- e) All of the above

6. Where should you aim when firing at an enemy?



7. Which of the following statements best describes you?

- a) I have unwavering, complete allegiance to the Empire, the Emperor and its cause
- b) I am actually a Rebel spy attempting to infiltrate and destroy the Empire from within by becoming a Stormtrooper
- c) Look, buddy, it pays the bills. Gotta problem with it?
- d) I am a moron
- e) All of the above

8. What is the proper procedure to follow when your installation comes under attack by Rebels?

- a) Stay calm, look for the nearest exit
- b) Aid others who may not be as well-trained to escape
- c) Go to the nearest guard station, wait for further orders
- d) Stumble around blindly, hit your head on a bulkhead, render yourself unconscious

9. If you were to force some Rebels to flee down a garbage chute, your next course of action would be:

- a) Jump down after them
- b) Turn trash compactor on, make sure the exits are covered, and wait for their unlikely exit
- c) Turn trash compactor on, assume they are dead or shortly will be, wander off
- d) Assume they are dead or shortly will be, wander off
- e) What was I doing here again?

10. You think that combat armor should:

- a) Be free and easy to move in
- b) Protect you against enemy attacks
- c) Blend into its surroundings
- d) Stand out, restrict movement, offer little or no protection, and render the wearer unable to see

11. In a former life, you believe you were:



a) Boba Fett



b) Darth Vader



c) Anakin Skywalker



d) A bowling pin

Final question: What is the first emotion that pops into your head when you hear the word, "Ewoks?"

- a) Warmth
- b) Disgust
- c) Contescension
- d) Intense, blinding fear

This concludes the test. You will hear back from your local Imperial Recruitment facility in 3-4 standard weeks. Thank you for your application.



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50 THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW...

1 Nick Nolte, Christopher Walken, and Bert Reynolds were up for the part of Han Solo. Jodie Foster was the second option for Leia. One rumor said that Sissy Spacek was cast as Leia, but when Carrie Fisher refused to do nude scenes in *Corrie*, the two swapped roles.

2 In the original draft of *ROTJ*, Lando was supposed to die and the Millennium Falcon destroyed attempting to escape the explosion.

3 It cost \$50 million to restore and upgrade *Star Wars*. It cost \$9 million to actually make the movie in the first place. That's Hollywood for ya.

4 When Luke Skywalker returns to the rebel base after destroying the Death Star in *Star Wars*, he steps out of the cockpit and Carrie Fisher comes running towards him screaming, "Luke!" If you listen closely you'll allegedly hear Mark Hamill say, "Carrie!" Oops...



5 The Ewoks were originally supposed to be Wookiees, while Endor would make the Wookiee home planet, which would make the subsequent assemblings of stormtroopers much, much more convincing.

6 John Ratzenberger, aka Cliff Claven from "Cheers," was an imperial guard named Major Dertlin in *The Empire Strikes Back*. He was the one rattling off meaningless trivia.

7 Carrie Fisher spent most of her time shooting the scene in Jabba's Palace trying to prevent her metal bikini from falling off.

8 Denis Lawson, who played Wedge (I don't need no stinkin' Force, Farm Boy), is also the real-life uncle of Ewan "Obi-Wan" McGregor.

9 After the trash compactor has started in *Star Wars*, you can see a stormtrooper bang his head on a doorway.

10 If you were able to look inside the model used for the amazing Corellian Corvette flyover that kicked off *Star Wars*, you would see a poster for the movie and a PlayBoy Playmate.

11 Jabba the Hutt was originally a fat Irish guy in the previously-unreleased footage of *Star Wars*.

12 The woman who fired the Ion Cannon in *Empire*, Brigitte Kahn, went on to have a successful film career, including appearing in several Merchant-Ivory films. Why we know this, don't ask.

13 In the final scene of *Star Wars*, the audience full of people are actually cardboard cutouts.

14 The actor inside the Wampa suit in *Empire*, Howie Weed, went on to appear in movies like *Gremlins*, *The Lost World* and *Men In Black*.

15 Carrie Fisher has an English accent for exactly one scene in *Star Wars*.

16 The name of the fat guy who dies in the Death Star assault, is (and we're not making this up), Porkins. He was reaching for a microwaved burrito right before he got shot, leading to a lapse of concentration that proved fatal. (This, we made up)

17 After the original theatrical release of *Star Wars*, George Lucas had all of Aunt Beru's lines redubbed because the real actress' voice was deemed too deep.

18 In the original video release of *Star Wars*, you can see, for just a moment, an electrical cord that runs up the sleeve of Obi-Wan directly to his lightsaber.

19 The scene with the snowbeast Wampa was created to cover the effects of a bad car wreck that Mark Hamill was in between the first and second films. This added scene replaced an entire subplot involving an invasion of the rebel base by a pack of angry Wampas.

20 Cash-strapped Twentieth Century Fox came within days of selling its stake in *Star Wars*, but decided to hold on after a positive test screening. The profits eventually saved the studio.

21 The Director's Guild of America did not like the fact that *Star Wars* had no opening credits and they fined Lucas. The Director refused because he believed it would destroy the opening.

22 The scene of the escape pod leaving the Corellian Corvette was the first ever created by ILM.

23 The scripted version of Han and Leia's goodbye in *The Empire Strikes Back* went as follows: "I love you, I couldn't tell you before, but it's true," to which Solo responds, "Just remember that, 'cause I'll be back." Harrison Ford came up with the reply, "I know," which got used.



24 Carrie Fisher was reportedly so hopped-up on coke during the filming of the "Star Wars Holiday Special" that she needed to use Chewbacca just to stay upright while singing her big solo. Her singing was so bad that the sound technicians turned up the music loud enough to drown out her voice.

25 According to *Star Wars: The Annotated Screenplays*, Darth Vader is approximately "three-quarters mechanical man and one-quarter human."

26 Jabba the Hutt originally spoke in English and at the last second, his language was changed to Huttese. If you look carefully and read his lips, you can see they are speaking in clear English, exactly in line with the subtitles.

27 Mark Hamill was originally told that his father and Darth Vader were different people (backing up the claim that George Lucas was making this up as he went along).



28 The sound of a TIE Fighter was created by combining the squeal of a young elephant with the sound of a car driving by on a rain-slicked highway.

29 Besides Darth Vader, only one man survived the first Death Star explosion: General Bast. Bast is probably best known as the muton-chopped soldier who tried to warn Tarkin of the Death Star's vulnerability to a single spaceship. Bast showed up alive and kicking after the explosion in the drafty campy "Star Wars Holiday Special."

30 The four most prolific species in the *Star Wars* trilogy: Humans, Ewoks, Jawas, and finally Mon Calamari. Eight of these squid-like aliens showed up in *Return of the Jedi*.

31 According to the "Star Wars Holiday Special," Chewbacca's furry father was named Itchy, his wife Nala, and his son Lumpy.

32 In *Return of the Jedi*, you can see stuffed Tauntaun heads in the palace of Jabba the Hut. It seems that the NRA was around a Long Time Ago in a Galaxy Far, Far Away.

33 When shooting *ESB*, Lucas told David Prowse (Vader) to say "Obi Wan is your father" in order to mislead his own actors and crew. Only later in post-production was the real dialogue added.

34 *Star Wars* is loosely based on the Kurosawa film *The Hidden Fortress*.

35 Only one Ewok died in the entire battle of Endor. Amount of time dedicated to the Ewok's death: 12 seconds. Amount of time dedicated to the death of the entire planet of Alderaan: three seconds.

36 The title *Revenge of the Jedi* was named for two reasons: Lucas didn't think it represented the way a Jedi would behave, and *Star Trek II* was going to be subtitled *The Revenge of Khan*.

37 One of Jabba's dancers has her breast exposed for a few scant moments, which was rectified in the special editions. Doh!

38 Quite possibly the worst *Star Wars* parody of all time was an all-too-serious episode of "Donnie and Marie" in 1977 that included Kris Kristofferson as Han Solo, Redd Foxx as Obi-Wan, a very short Darth Vader, and a chorus line of dancing stormtroopers.

39 Boba Fett made his first appearance in an 11-minute animated short that ran during the "Star Wars Holiday Special."

40 The original Jawa with the plastic (not the cloth) cape is the most valuable *Star Wars* figure with an in-the-box asking price of \$2500.

41 Kenner had only a black-and-white picture from the waist up to create the Snaggletooth figure. They had to guess his height, suit color, and skin color, and got all three wrong. For future reference, in a *George Lucas* movie, always assume the character is a midgit.

42 Parker Brothers once made a board game called *Wicket the Ewok and Friends in a Food Gathering Adventure*. Oooh, goosebumps.

43 Stunt accented Brit David Prowse is still angry that they did not use his voice as Darth Vader. He was not told that his voice was being dubbed over.



44 Luke Skywalker held his breath so long during the trash compactor scene that he burst a blood vessel in his face. The rest of the scene showed only one side of his face — no need for a Wampa cover this time.

45 Just to show you how much of a massive marketing push went behind the Ewoks — the name Ewok was never used throughout the entirety of the *Star Wars* trilogy.

46 While filming *Return of the Jedi*, the production crew worked under the fake title *Blue Harvest*.

47 After R5-D4 blows his motivator when he was about to be sold to the Skywalkers, he immediately reappears in the droid lineup. He's invincible!

48 The Imperial AT-ATs were based on a ship-lauding structure that Lucas saw in an Oakland, CA, shipyard.

49 The Tatooine scenes in all the *SW* movies (including *Episode 2*) were shot in Tunisia. There's a town in that country called Tatabouine.

50 There are eight separate instances of hands or arms getting chopped off or shot during the trilogy: two in *Star Wars*, three in *Empire Strikes Back*, and three in *Return of the Jedi*. We're sure there's gonna be more in *Episode 3*.



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REBIRTH OF THE BEDROOM INDUSTRY

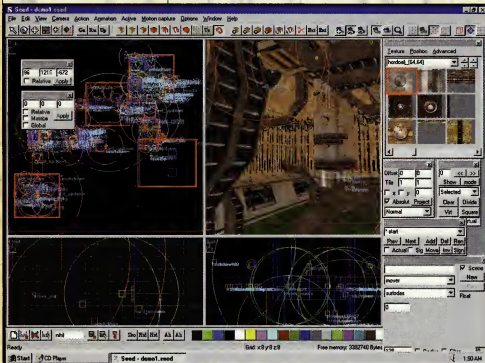
OR HOW TO MAKE MONEY FROM YOUR ROOM... AND NOT GET ARRESTED.

Once upon a time, in an industry not too far away, bedroom lights burned late into the night, keyboards jabbered with incessant tapping, and the quiet night air was broken only by occasional curses that often escalated to cacophonous blasphemous. But behind the musty odors, reams of design documents, magazines, reference materials, and pizza boxes, creativity was brewing. Not run-of-the-mill corporate creativity — this was uninhibited, chaotic, wild, and unrepentant creativity.

Apple II's, Commodore 64's, Sinclair Spectrums and the earliest PCs all had eager coders trying to figure out how to take expensive pieces of math-based hardware and shoot aliens. Many of PC gaming's leading lights had humble beginnings. But the march of technology squished much of the potential for this amateur, bedroom-based creativity. All of a sudden a Silicon Graphics workstation was required, along with experts in 3D modeling, to create cut scenes that highlighted the power of the processors, but dimmed the spark of creativity. But this situation has begun to swing back in favor of the dedicated amateur developer.

Affordable PCs and high-end graphics technology has seen the return of the bedroom industry. The musty smells are returning as small, dedicated teams of programmers and artists get busy.

Finally there's a place for those efforts to be showcased. For the 15 finalists in the First Annual Game Developers Conference Game Festival, they've beaten out 100 entrants and are contenders for the \$10,000 Grand Prize. Check out demos and movies from some of the contenders on Disc Two, and scratch the surface of these developers' plights right now with these tales of an independent developer.



Plastic surgeon development tools for the redesign of Pamela Anderson.

ACIDIA

WEB: www.whoola.com

COMPANY: Whoola.com

TYPE OF GAME: Web-browser based RPG

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON THIS GAME? 6 full-time people (5 programmers, 1 3D artist) and 11 part-timers, including 2 artists from the Descend team, 1 from *Rainbow Six*, 6 chemists (including 4 Ph.D.'s) and 3 high school teachers

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IT? Eight months

HOW ARE YOU PAYING THE BILLS UNTIL IT GETS SIGNED? A Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR) grant from the National Science Foundation. Almost all independent game developers are on a meager cost-of-living allowance.

IN A NUTSHELL: In this game, you learn 30 basic chemistry concepts in a "science fact-based adventure." *Acidia* is intended to entertain, first and foremost, but we also strive to educate by utilizing the power of the web. The completion of numerous puzzles requires a collaborative effort with many other users.



WHAT ELSE: Our aim is to bundle with the best-selling chemistry books (renowned chemistry teachers work on the project) and use the game as a companion for a semester-long course on chemistry at the high school level. In preparation, a new addition was made to the development team. When cranking on the demo for the GDC, work had to be inter-

rupted for "labor" reasons. Not a staff strike, but a baby girl's arrival to the lead developer and his partner, who also works on *Acidia*.

WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER?

Scary. Over-worked, under-paid, putting all your eggs in one basket, and hoping things will change real soon.

BOOBIES

WEB: www.daedaloninteractive.com

COMPANY: Daedalon Interactive Entertainment

TYPE OF GAME: Side-scrolling strategy

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON THIS GAME? Dos. Due. Zwei. Two. (Repeating it makes it seem like more...)

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IT? Part time for about a year, although the original design document is over two years old



HOW ARE YOU PAYING THE BILLS UNTIL IT GETS SIGNED? To one degree or another, we have transformed into dreaded "wife leeches." We have also done contract work for other developers and our own clients.

IN A NUTSHELL: Instead of directly attacking the enemy with

guns, swords, missiles, fists, farts, or some other means of face-to-face conflict, the danger is in the environment, and you have the means to use the world against the enemies. Where other games take the pain to the enemy, *Boobies* encourages you to take the enemy to the pain.

WHAT ELSE: Part *Worms 2*, part *Indiana Jones*, it requires a slice of devious thinking to win. By setting various traps in the environments, the rendered, rounded enemies can be spiked, catapulted, squashed, and smashed.

WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER? Planning tours to publishers to best

economize on the air fares, and sleeping in the rental car, the life of the independent developer is anything but glamorous. A few months ago, Gabe Newell talked about how the garage developer wasn't dead — how a small team could still put together a great game if they were determined and passionate enough to do it. Those words were enormously encouraging. You look for encouragement wherever you can find it because you work until 3:00 in the morning. You accept contract work and wonder if you even want your name on it when it's done, but it helps pay the bills. You create art, design docs and business plans and codes, then rework them and rewrite them, and ... you hope.

BFRIS ZERO-GRAVITY FIGHTER COMBAT

WEB: www.aegistech.com

COMPANY: Aegis Simulation Technologies

TYPE OF GAME: A first-person, 3D accelerated space fighter combat action game

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON THIS GAME? Four

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IT? I started on the engine immediately after we graduated from college in spring '96. I didn't leave my full-time job to start Aegis Tech until February '98



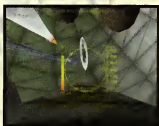
HOW ARE YOU PAYING THE BILLS UNTIL IT GETS SIGNED? We sell plasma twice a week and sometimes hustle people at 3-card Monty! Actually, I was working as a mechanical engineer for a year and a half; during that time, I kept living in Ramen-eating college student mode and packratted away

about half of my post-tax salary. We've been using those earnings for equipment, trade show trips, game production costs, and food for me for the last 13 months. Of course, I'm mostly broke now, but it seemed like a really good idea at the time.

IN A NUTSHELL: This space shooter is played in enclosed arenas connected by teleporters. It features real physics down to friction, momentum, and inertia. 6 vehicles, 11 weapons/powerups, force feedback, and full 3D sound are supported. Network play supports 63 players via LAN and 24 players via modem using advanced predictive dynamics.

WHAT ELSE: The network play was designed from day one into the TrueDimension engine to allow players with a 700+ ping to play.

WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER? Work 10-12 hour days plus weekends, stress out, and wonder how the *Evel Knievel* game got a publisher.



CRIME CITIES

PROJECT LEAD: Andrew Beard

COMPANY: Techland

TYPE OF GAME: 3D city-based shooter/flight sim

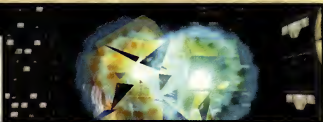
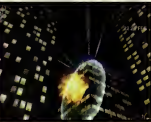
HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON THIS GAME? Currently 12, though a total of 25 have worked on it since the project first got started

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IT? Three years

HOW ARE YOU PAYING THE BILLS UNTIL IT GETS SIGNED? Distribut-

ing our own lesser titles, and other people's [titles] here in Poland. All the funding for this has been generated internally.

IN A NUTSHELL: Destroying the Mafia clans who control the Pandemia prison colony sends you into a fast-paced, space-style

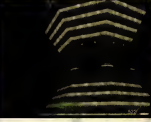


shooter set in a 3D city. Features impressive 3D accelerated effects.

WHAT ELSE: Initially due to be finished in six months, the game's biggest draw is the way it creates an atmosphere of danger.

WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER? It's like being in a coast-to-coast race, but being forced to stay in the slow

lane. Luckily, our car has wings and jet propulsion.



EVERNIGHT

WEB:

www.vr1.com/sneak/evernight/

COMPANY: VR-1

TYPE OF GAME: Online, multiplayer turn-based fantasy strategy

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON THIS GAME? Three artists and four engineers

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IT? The concept was first conceived in August '97



HOW ARE YOU PAYING THE BILLS UNTIL IT GETS SIGNED? VR-1 has several other online titles released and currently hosted by ISPs and networks around the world.

IN A NUTSHELL: Intended to have a strong strategic depth, but be accessible to anybody online, *EverNight* is a battle of monsters and spells as you manage your empire. Like, say, *Heroes of Might and Magic* meets *Risk*.

WHAT ELSE: Based in Boulder, Colorado, VR-1 creates a wide variety of massively multiplayer online games including Microsoft's *Fighter Ace*, *UltraCorps* and *Nomads of Klanth*. In contrast to



many of their competitors, VR-1 has a size that's enabled them to purchase Devil's Thumb Entertainment who are currently developing *Hired Guns* for PlayStation.

WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER? It allows VR-1 to maintain our creativity while delivering innovative products to our publishers.

FIRE AND DARKNESS

WEB: singularity-software.com

COMPANY: Singularity Software

TYPE OF GAME: Futuristic 3D real-time strategy game



HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON THIS GAME? Five programmers, an artist, and a musician

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IT? Almost three years in one form or the other

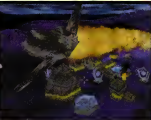
HOW ARE YOU PAYING THE BILLS UNTIL IT GETS SIGNED? We're all full-time students so our parents are paying our bills, so we have the luxury of working indefinitely for free.

IN A NUTSHELL: A fully 3D engine supports a simulated world with realistic landscapes and physics (and also the latest in 3D accelerator cards). Large explosions and a full range of land, sea, and air-based units are all featured in the melting pot of a futuristic war.

WHAT ELSE: We've considered giving away a multiplayer-only version through an ad-based gaming network. That would give us a

small revenue stream and, with any luck, a big audience for upgrades, sequels, or future retail products (once the team has managed to graduate from the evidently cushy student life).

WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER? Well, it beats flipping burgers. It beats going to class, too.



FLAGSHIP: CHAMPION

WEB: www.xtreme.net/keithn/flagship/flagship.htm

COMPANY: N/A

TYPE OF GAME: Starship combat set in an interactive comic book



HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON THIS GAME?

2 comic artists, 1 animator, 1 musician, 1 tester, and some guy who had to pick up everything else — design, writing, programming, sound engineering, poster the others, and slaving insufficiently for the cat

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IT? Just over four months

HOW ARE YOU PAYING THE BILLS UNTIL IT GETS SIGNED? The ill-gotten gains of previously whoring myself; the kindness of strangers.



IN A NUTSHELL: From your battle bridge, you study a holographic sensor sphere to view the situation around your flagship and choose your combat strategies. You command subordinate officers to navigate, operate weapons, and perform other functions, while you

determine the larger issues of timing, position, heading, targeting and hopefully winning.

WHAT ELSE: Maybe if people actually paid for shareware, the quality of independent games would improve. Although I have no expectations for the game, if I find a publisher that'll change soon enough. My ego inflates to fill the space available (and a QuickTime video is available on the web site).

WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER? It's like working twice as hard at a regular job, but you get to sleep on the job. And I get to eat all the candy I want.

FOOD CHAIN

WEB: www.cajungames.com

COMPANY: Cajun Games

TYPE OF GAME: Mac-based strategy board game based on the balance of nature

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON THIS GAME? Five people developed the Mac version

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IT? It took a year to complete the Mac version (which is available now — a demo version can be downloaded and you can also purchase the full version from

the web site). The Windows version is being done essentially by one part-time person — its development has been going on for about a half year

HOW ARE YOU PAYING THE BILLS UNTIL IT GETS SIGNED? While in development, we relied on savings and contract work. Now that the Mac version's done, we're self-publishing it and still taking on occasional contract work to keep the company going.

IN A NUTSHELL: Cartoon creatures eat each other in order to survive. Your task is to balance the natural

selection of creatures, ensuring some stay alive, while others need to be eaten.

WHAT ELSE: Over 1500 hand-drawn frames of animation keep the game lively with a focus on being low-tech, but addictive. The idea is to create a whole world of creatures, ensuring some eat others to maintain the harmony.



WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER? It has its perks in that you have no asinine bosses telling you what to do and you get to make your own hours. It's also nice to be able to walk five steps from your "home" to your "office" (we run Cajun out of my apartment) and not have to deal with rush-hour commutes. But on the other hand you don't have the financial security of a "real" job. You can go with long, stressful periods, but you have to learn to take the bad along with the good. There's always the inherent feeling that you're going to be outdone by a bigger company. If I were to sum the whole thing up in one word, I'd go for the obvious one — independence.

JOURNEY INTO THE BRAIN

WEB: www.morphonix.com

COMPANY: Morphonix

TYPE OF GAME: Children's education

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON THIS GAME? Approximately 22, though a team of eight did most of the work

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IT? I first submitted the initial grant application to the National Institute of Mental Health's Small Business Innovation Research Program in 1993



HOW ARE YOU PAYING THE BILLS UNTIL IT GETS SIGNED? The first grant was awarded in May of 1994. After completing a prototype and testing the program with children, we submitted the second grant application in 1995. It was funded in 1996. In the nine months between the one grant ending and

the next arriving, I had trouble paying bills and ate a lot of rice.

IN A NUTSHELL: It's a story-based game that teaches 7-11 year old children about the brain and its relationship to behavior. It's undergoing clinical trials with the staff at PCXL.

WHAT ELSE: Gameplay embodies the way a memory is retrieved, as well as the recent insight that the brain is like an ecological system whose parts are interdependent. In the "Fire a Synapse" activity, the player picks off alien "impostor" particles (the kind of substances, such as drugs, that interfere with normal brain function)

while helping the brain's own neurotransmitters find their target.

WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER? It's fun, but it's also a lot of work. Since it takes so long to get the funding for the game, it's very important to feel passionate about what I'm doing.



MIND ROVER

WEB: www.cognitoy.com

COMPANY: CogniToy

TYPE OF GAME: 3D robot-inspired strategy puzzler

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON THIS GAME? 4 full-time developers, 1 full-time artist, and 1 QA/Webmaster/finance/marketing, etc. We also have consultants working on music/sound design and other artwork (web design, adverts, etc.)

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IT? The original

ideas came over three years ago. But we got our first funding and started CogniToy in April of 1997

HOW ARE YOU PAYING THE BILLS UNTIL IT GETS SIGNED? We have raised money from a small number of private investors.



IN A NUTSHELL: You build and program robots that then compete in races, puzzles and battles.

WHAT ELSE: A high-end graphics system is a stand-out feature of a game concept never seen before (though practiced by some amateur robot-building types). What began as a Java prototype of a

simulation system became an educational robot-building game.

WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER? There are definitely some difficult times when you don't know where the next dollar will be coming from, but following your own dreams is worth it.

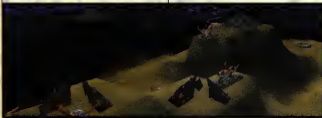
RESURRECTION

WEB: www.mind-control.com

COMPANY: Mind Control Software

TYPE OF GAME: Fantasy/strategy

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON THIS GAME? Two. We've done all the programming,



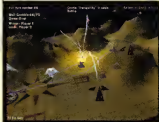
some of the art, and all the sound (taken from other game projects we've worked on)

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IT? Less than a year. We started in August '98 in 2D. We moved over to the 3D engine in November

HOW ARE YOU PAYING THE BILLS UNTIL IT GETS SIGNED? The money to pay for the project comes from savings and profit from other projects Mind Control has taken on.

IN A NUTSHELL: Inspired by games like *Warlords*, *Heroes of Might and Magic* with a definite touch of *Populous* thrown in the mix, those 2D game concepts are being given a 3D makeover.

WHAT ELSE: The gameplay is designed to utilize the engine's ability to greatly vary the terrain and give rewards (in the form of rendered cut scenes) for making things happen.



WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER?

Tight. While we can easily take the project through alpha stage, the art, sound, music and testing necessary to get us to beta and ship are beyond my current financial means. So getting it in front of potential publishers is vital to the future of the project.

SEED

WEB: www.seedgame.com

COMPANY: Human Soft, Inc.

TYPE OF GAME: First-person platform game

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON THIS GAME? Essentially five

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IT? About a year

HOW ARE YOU PAYING THE BILLS UNTIL IT GETS SIGNED? Human Soft has already had games published (most recently the underwa-



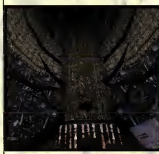
ter action adventure *Fatal Abyss* that they did for Segasoft). They also have a Hungarian office employing 30 people.

IN A NUTSHELL: Innovative! While the first-person perspective wouldn't normally lend itself to a platform game, *Seed* uses lighting

and shadows as a key element of gameplay. So, in order to make the necessary jumps and to solve the various puzzles from a first-person perspective, your character casts a shadow and you use that to navigate the platforms that are normally easier in third-person.

WHAT ELSE: Accurate realtime lighting takes advantage of the dynamic light sources in order to cast a very realistic shadow of your character. Enemies also cast shadows and that can be used against them. In addition, real world physics, motion-captured animation and Glide and OpenGL support give a definite sense of professional polish.

WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER? Human Soft already has seven published games behind them, though their independent status allows them the freedom to work on a variety of projects (currently four, ranging from RPGs to racing games).



TERMINUS

WEB: www.vvisions.com/terminus/

COMPANY: Vicarious Visions

TYPE OF GAME: Space combat shooter with RPG elements thrown into the mix



HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON THIS GAME? Nine full-time and a number of contractors, so 15-20 total

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IT? Over two years

HOW ARE YOU PAYING THE BILLS UNTIL IT GETS SIGNED? At first, relying mostly on private investments, but lately VV has taken on other projects to stay funded.

IN A NUTSHELL: Most space shooters fit a familiar pattern of mission-based objectives that you repeat until you've completed it in



the way you want. *Terminus* tries to make failing a real possibility by having a branching structure that lets you play a dynamic role in the evolving storyline.

WHAT ELSE: The graphic effects are getting this game noticed. When ships explode they break up in to pieces, with all the bits trailing fire behind them. But graphical eye candy tells only part of the

WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER? Hard. It's a lot more responsibility because many things are not handled for us. Even last year most of the big names told us that *Terminus* was impossible. It was a blessing in disguise, freeing us from the control to make it "marketable," in other words, the same as every other space shooter.



VD

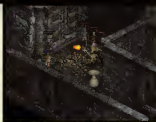
WEB: members.xoom.com/nspgames/

COMPANY: Nothing Special Productions

TYPE OF GAME: Turn-based tactical combat set in a medieval fantasy world

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WORKING ON THIS GAME? 3 - programming, graphics, and game design and research

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IT? Approximately one year



HOW ARE YOU PAYING THE BILLS UNTIL IT GETS SIGNED? All of the expenses incurred in making the game so far have come from our own personal savings.

IN A NUTSHELL: The strategy of managing resources, leading an army, and hiring recruits is the key element as you play one of two

sides in a bitter struggle to crush the enemy. The concept is to make players consider the repercussions of their moves.

WHAT ELSE: It allows players to think about their moves and also allowed the developers to create opponents who react with a realistic "human-like" AI, which should lead to more interesting and com-

petitive gameplay. Not looking to incorporate the latest in gaming technology, NSP needed to ensure that this fun factor was paramount in the game's evolution.

WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER? Hard work, determination, eating bologna sandwiches, and plenty of sleepless nights.



PCXL: JUDGE AND JURY

We had to make some comment about the games. We just had to. Most are still in early development, while some are essentially finished. As such, it's really difficult to assess which are worthy of appearing on store shelves.

That said, our pick for the stand-out? Space shooter *Terminus* has some excellent effects and looks the most professionally polished of the bunch.

Resurrection has an intriguing fantasy-based, chess-like skew using a deformable 3D terrain. The slightly complex concept could pose a problem though.

Fire and Darkness sports some impressive effects, though compe-

tion in the realtime strategy market is extremely fierce and a slew of new games are readying for release (*Machines* from Acclaim, *Warzone 2100* from Eidos).

VD has a *Diablo*-esque look, though the turn-based focus could slow down the gameplay, unless it's beefed up with some enthralling strategy.

Of course, it's all conjecture as the jury considers its verdicts based on more advanced versions of the games than we were able to get our grubby hands on. Regardless, hopefully you'll now have an idea of what kind of dedication it takes to get your own concept to the verge of stardom.

WHAT INDEPENDENT GAMES NEED FOR 'ARTSY' CRED

Independent games? What ideas does that conjure up? Obviously, the same kind of response you'd get to the concept of an independent movie, right? Well, not quite. Here are a few things that independent movies contain, but these games seem to have overlooked

INDY FILM STAPLES

WHAT→ Dark haired "sassy" actress who goes against all stereotypes
INDY FILM EXAMPLE→ Parker Posey
WHY THEY DO IT→ Every independent film worth its tiny budget has one
HOW IT'D HELP GAMES→ We've had enough with the silicon Lara-clones, bring on the sassiest!

WHAT→ Incest
INDY FILM EXAMPLE→ *Spunk: The Monkey*
WHY THEY DO IT→ Sick curiosity that can't be explored through the mass media/popcorn movies
HOW IT'D HELP GAMES→ It would give new, and disturbing, meaning to the term "family" games



Parker Posey can be in our game anytime

WHAT→ Subtitles
INDY FILM EXAMPLE→ Any film whose trailer starts with the phrase, "In a world" or "One woman's journey"
WHY THEY DO IT→ Because us silly Americans like to know what is being said in the movies we watch
HOW IT'D HELP GAMES→ Subtitles immediately give artsy credibility. Examples: Any shit French film is considered "dark, poignant, and touching" when released in the U.S.

the heat is on...



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How to Play Games at Work

— And Get Away With It!

Not everyone can be paid for playing games at their place of work. PCXL staffers get away with it, but that's because we're professionals, in a weird, geeky sorta way. But how about the poor working stiff, just an anonymous cog in the corporate machine, who wants to play games at work and not get his ass fired? Is this you? Well, we here at PCXL Towers certainly haven't overlooked goofing off on the job — we hear it results in low productivity, shifting paradigms, and other business jargon that makes our eyes glaze over — but we do know it has a proud history. The first real computer game, *Computer Space*, was created by a couple of guys who wanted to play games

instead of do the work they were supposed to be doing. So, while we do not condone the practice, if you're going to do it anyway, you might as well do it right. If you're reading this at your desk, hiding behind an accounting ledger, then you're on the right track.

Getting Started

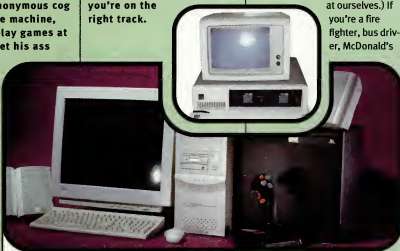
First, you need a computer. Sure, you could hide a Gameboy in your briefcase, but that would be downright sad. Secondly, you need to have the type of job that allows you to have your own desk and not much responsibility. (Again, we point the fingers at ourselves.) If you're a fire fighter, bus driver, McDonald's

THE COMPUTER

This is your first challenge. Some jobs may require a top-of-the-line powerhouse, but most do not. It is hard to justify a PII 450Mhz PC with a Voodoo 2 card just to run Excel, but unless the only game you want to play is *Solitaire*, you'll need something comparable. Your best bet is to A) Work for a Cool or Clueless manager, B) Be best buddies with someone in the MIS department, or C) Work in the MIS department yourself. MIS/IT departments are like mythical treasure troves for the frustrated gamer — and they usually get the best stuff first. Convince anyone who will listen that your productivity will increase exponentially once a faster computer arrives on your desk. Help this process along by experiencing mysterious "accidents" that erase your work or complain about how long it takes to process tasks. Be creative and place a dollar amount on lost time and productivity — managers eat that crap up. With any luck, a shiny new PC will soon be sitting on your desk.

THE 3D CARD

And you thought getting a new computer was tough? Unless you have a hopelessly naïve boss, don't even attempt to requisition a decent 3D graphics card. It will



If your current 486 happened upon an unfortunate "accident," then you might be forced to get a new (and much faster) machine.

fry cook, or air traffic controller, playing games on the job probably isn't a good idea. Finally, you need to have the right type of boss — some of these people actually insist on seeing the results of your daily labors. Tread carefully and beware overzealous supervisors (See "Who's The Boss?").

get noticed somewhere up the food chain — usually by workaholic prigs in finance who question everything — and become an advertisement for your bold endeavors. You basically have two choices: Get used to chunky software modes or buy your own. If you decide to buy one yourself and install it in the dead of night, remember that you do so at your own risk. A computer switch-out or untimely departure from the company could mean the forfeiture of an expensive investment.

THE DESK

Keeping the monitor screen hidden from snooping eyes is your first priority. The best set-up is to have an office with a closing door that allows you some privacy for "quiet contemplation." Cubicle-dwellers, on the other hand, must be craftier. Convince your boss that a childhood trauma (fabricate a sad story about bullies sneaking up from behind) necessitates you facing the cubicle opening at all times, thereby ensuring your computer monitor faces the back wall. Befriend a doctor who can document your many phobias, explaining why you absolutely must sit in the very back of the room and away from all doors, passersby, and authority figures.

The Smart Installation

THE GAMES

Quiet games with simple control schemes are perfect for a crowded office. Realtime strategy games don't require keyboard pounding or a 3D card, and best of all, may



What's wrong with this picture? Everything, if you want to keep your job. Well ... Babe-O-Rama can stay.

give the impression that actual work is being performed. First-person shooters are much trickier, but can be played successfully if you keep your cool. Avoid adventure games, sports games, flight sims, or any game that requires too much of a commitment (or equipment). Remember — you need a game that can be played in short doses.

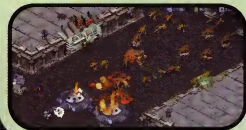
THE INSTALL

When installing a game, never use the default name. A folder on your hard drive titled *Half-Life* is an invitation to disaster. Instead, use an innocuous name like "1997 Receivables" or "Tax Archives" — just make the title appropriate to your position, but incomprehensibly boring to busybodies. Most companies perform hard drive audits from time to time so pro-

tect your files and be prepared to uninstall the evidence.

THE PERIPHERALS

Your mouse and keyboard should be all you need. The use of joysticks, gamepads, and steering wheels are a sure way to get caught. Speakers are a judgement call — if sound is an absolute must, then get headphones instead. Plan ahead and make it known that you enjoy listening to music while working. Wearing headphones consistently ensures that suspicions won't be raised. The drawback is that they make it more difficult to hear approaching footsteps. So keep the volume low and consider putting a mirror on your monitor to protect you from those roving eyes.



Starcraft doesn't require special controls or jerky movements and is perfect for most jobs. *Mad Trax* = Pink Slip.

WHO'S THE BOSS

A fanatical employer wreaks the most carefully laid plans of goofing off. These are the types of bosses you might run up against.

THE COOL BOSS

This guy used to be just like you and understands your needs. He will tolerate game playing during lunch or afterhours and makes a good deathmatch candidate. Don't be cocky — the Cool Boss is a hands-off manager, but will want real work to get done (when he's not playing games, see picture). Besides, he knows all your tricks.

THE CLUELESS BOSS

People are frequently promoted above their level of competence, thus creating the Clueless Boss. He doesn't know what you do, how you do it, or how long projects take, but he thinks he does. Earn this boss' trust and the world is yours.

THE ABSENT BOSS

He could be travelling, at home, or on vacation, or on speaker phone: a la "Charlie's Angels." But at least he's not looking over your shoulder. The absent boss may be a Cool Boss, but never a Clueless Boss — it takes intelligence to avoid this office.

HANDS-ON BOSS

Despite what it sounds like, (see picture) this dumbass shows up at the crack of dawn, is always tripping about work, and even helps you finish your projects — bastard! The only way to play games on this guy's clock is to get him hooked. A nice gift like *Half-Life* just might do the trick.

HARD ASS BOSS

Otherwise known as the stacy editor. This jerk gives you a week's worth of work and expects it in by noon tomorrow. Gaming isn't an option. Your only hope would be if your boss met a little "accident." Say, if he had a slip of that piping hot coffee you prepared (and he wins) and mysteriously keeled over from a heart attack. Just pray he isn't replaced by another Hard Ass Boss.



What comes between a man and his 3D card? His job.

EXCUSE ME?

Eventually, the unthinkable happens. Discavery doesn't necessarily mean you have been caught, though. Here are some excuses to keep yourself out of trouble

THE GIFT

"Oh, you caught me ... I wanted to test this game out on our system before giving it to you for [next holiday]. I hope you like it!"

DOWNSIDE → The loss of a game

AGGRESSIVE

"Yes, I am playing a game at work, dammit! After spending four weeks of overtime on reports, I need a little relaxation. It's either this or restarting my crack habit."

DOWNSIDE → Co-workers avoid you

BLAMING

"I just found this program on my computer. Johnson in Marketing must have installed it before his computer was passed on to me. No wonder he never gets anything done!"

DOWNSIDE → Stay away from Johnson in Marketing

PLAY DUMB

"Game? What game? You mean this? That's my screen saver. It sure looks like a game, doesn't it?"

DOWNSIDE → Boss wants the same screen saver

BLACKMAIL

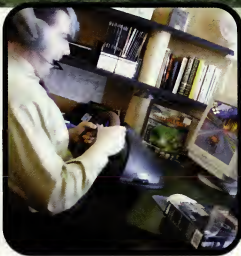
"Golly, I guess you caught me playing Sin. It reminds me of your cheap, raucy ongoing affair with the VP of Sales. Say, how's your wife doing?"

DOWNSIDE → Permanent transfer to Alaska

HYPNOSIS

"Isn't the Unreal landscape pretty? It's so calming that my eyelids droop just thinking about it. Relax ... you look so sleepy ... so very sleepy ..."

DOWNSIDE → Boss wants to cuddle



Compare: "Geek With Paycheck" or "Geek Without Paycheck." Which would you rather be?

Taking The Leap

Finally, the time has come. All your hard work in the pursuit of avoiding hard work is about to pay off. Help yourself along by following these tips.

LOWERED EXPECTATIONS

Remember how Scotty on "Star Trek" always padded his time estimates or denied repairs could be made, only to perform a "miracle" under the right circumstances? Scotty must have been a gamer, because he is your role model. Overestimate the amount of time necessary to finish any project — for example, if a report requires only four hours to complete, proclaim it will take, at the very least, four weeks. Wild exaggeration implies the project is more difficult

than originally believed. Be innovative — time not spent working can be spent playing. If it works for Ion Storm, it can work for you.

SET YOUR OWN HOURS

Overtime is an hourly worker's best friend — and you are going to need a lot of it to write those long, four-week reports. Companies with 8-5 workdays are often deserted tombs after hours — great for an extended bout of *Tribes*. You could just go home and play games on your own time, but why not be paid for it instead? If your hours are flexible, test your resolve by starting your shift at 5 a.m. That's three whole hours of playtime before anyone else shows up.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

Secrecy is the ultimate weapon of the guerrilla gamer. Bragging to co-workers about beating "the man" won't win you friends and will only endanger your extra-

vocational pursuits. Likewise, avoid excessive excitement during play — remember, you are supposed to be working. Shrieks of "I'm gonna kill you now, bitch" will only confirm the suspicion that you haven't been calculating payroll taxes for the past three hours.

CAMOUFLAGING THE GOODS

Game boxes and CDs have no place in the office. Leave the boxes and instructions (who needs 'em?) at home and hide your game CDs in music CD boxes. Buying that new Korn album will benefit you in more ways than one.

BE PREPARED

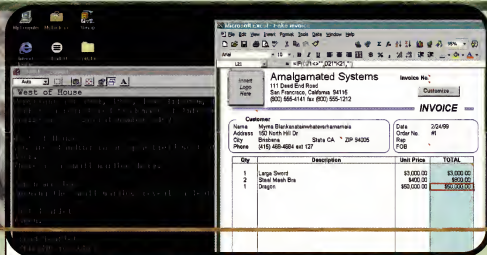
Gaming at work is not a clandestine activity for the timid. Always have a contingency plan ready in case you're close to being discovered. Keep a work program open so that you may switch to it immediately. Enjoy games that can be



See how inconspicuous that *Half-Life* disc looks in a music jewelbox? This will work with all your games.



Notice the clean desk, headphones, and professional demeanor. Too bad it's all wasted on *Ultima Online*.



Zork is so subtle, it almost looks like real work.

played in a window — ones that can be covered, minimized, or closed with minimal fuss. In Windows 95/98, the task bar itself may be minimized in cases of emergency — stealthily hiding treacherous programs.

This LAN Is My LAN

One of the most important reasons to play games at work is for access to the company LAN. For the gamer, it is a datastream connection to nirvana. Most companies have T1s or better, which means you can become the elusive LPB (low-ping bastard).

RECRUITMENT

You are not alone — others will follow if you lead. Silence may be golden, but single player *Quake II* sucks ass. Discreetly question your co-workers to find willing participants, but don't approach management unless you are a member yourself. Their belief in something called "work ethics" will curtail your fun. Eventually, a group of like-minded individuals can be found. Just don't tie up the server during business hours or the entire group might get caught.

INVASION FORCE

Co-workers are not your only option. If you are feeling adventurous, smuggle your own group of players into the workplace. This is definitely an after hours mission, but will be good preparation for playing *Rainbow Six*. The amount of subterfuge necessary depends on your company's security, but go for the gusto and take no prisoners. (See "Into The Breach")

The Good Life

Joining the ranks of the covert gamer has its privileges, but one must use discipline.

HEALTH BENEFITS

The working gamer experiences less stress, resulting in better health and lower company insurance premiums. Feel good about letting the company reap some benefits. It might alleviate those annoying pangs of guilt.

CONTROL

As a life of deceit becomes easier, avoid the trap of addiction. Spending the

majority of your time gaming is a sure sign that you have a dead-end job. (Ouch! That hits close to home around here.) Wisely choose when to game — first thing in the morning, lunchtime, after hours, and weekends are the best times. The "Scotty Principle" works wonders in the short term, but could ultimately wreak havoc on your so-called "career."

LETTING GO

As amazing as it sounds, even the worst worker can get promoted. If an influx of responsibility comes your way, it might be time to rocket-jump out of your surreptitious gaming activities, at least for a while. With any luck, you may become a Cool Boss or, better yet, an Absent Boss complete with fully loaded laptop for some high-altitude business trip play.

Whatever your plans, the number one rule is to know your company. Use your instincts to avoid discovery, and not only will you get to play a lot of cool games, but keep your job to boot. Now get to work!



Playing with the "software" pictured above might lead to a sexual harassment suit. You're better off sticking with *Quake II*.

INTO THE BREACH

Sneaking friends into the office isn't for the faint of heart. Think *Mission Impossible* and create a gameplan that is good for you. Here are examples.



The Secret Approach

THE DIRECT APPROACH

A Cool Boss may tolerate your friends, even if the company does not. With his blessing, a small group of people can play in the office, without causing suspicion. If anyone asks, shamelessly nam-drop and announce that the Cool Boss said it was okay.



The Clean Team

THE CLEAN TEAM

Sensational news is virtually invisible at most companies. Dress your friends as janitors and they can go anywhere. Learn the real cleaning crew's schedule to avoid any embarrassing moments.



Times in the Mist

TEMPS IN THE MIST

If security is tight, hire your friends as temp workers. This option requires manipulation and could backfire when the temps are found to be totally unqualified. But by then, your multiplayer jones will be satisfied.



What Suits You

WHAT SUITS YOU

Anyone wearing a suit can pass as an employee, expert, or client. Just because he's your unemployed brother doesn't mean he won't look good in a tie. Be brazen and take him on a tour of the company before you play Tribes. This will require an Absent or Clever Boss to work!

(We fully realize that these photos have very little to do with this feature. We just liked the cleaning lady and temp babes.)

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wrong by showing 32-bit
rendering can be done
without a performance hit..."
www.gamersdepot.com



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- Packing 32MB of memory, RAGE FURY gives you the fastest 128-bit 3D graphics accelerator available today
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- Supports ATI-TV WONDER, the TV tuner add-on board
- Check out www.atitech.com for history-making news on RAGE FURY and the latest 32-bit true color 3D games



THE
POWER
OF SPEED



QUAKE II FRAME RATES

32-bit COLOR | 800x600

ATI RAGE FURY (RAGE 128 GL)

66 fps

STB VELOCITY 4400 (RIVA TNT)

46 fps

STB V00000 3 3000

Not Supported

DIAMOND MONSTER FUSION (RANGHEX)

Not Supported

Fastest 32-bit color performance

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The WHEELIES

It's the award show you've been waiting for:
The ultimate PCXL force feedback driving wheel roundup ceremony!

Welcome, ladies and gentleman, to the first PCXL Force Feedback Driving Wheel award ceremony! Seven systems are competing for the coveted Wheelie this year, and believe us, competition was fierce.

Last year, there were only a few driving wheels on the market. They ranged from the excellent (Thrustmaster's NASCAR Pro) to the pathetic (CH Products Racing System), with not much in between. We're not going to try to figure out why hardware makers suddenly decided that everybody in the world, computer owner or otherwise, needed a driving wheel. The fact is, it seems like more driving wheels have come out in the past year than cars themselves. Couple that with the term "force feedback" becoming the biggest catch phrase in game controllers since "digital," and you've got a force feedback wheel bonanza!

We've spent the last few weeks knee deep in jerking, vibrating wheels (it's not as much fun as it sounds) trying to figure out which ones are worth your hard-earned pennies, and which of them belong in the junkyard. Each was scored in several categories after being tested. We used *Viper Racing* to get a feel for the realism of the wheel, while *Monster Truck Madness 2*'s extreme forces showed us how powerful each wheel is. We also ran a few *Need For Speed III* races for immersive action, and finally, we played *Carmageddon II* because it's gory.

Here, in no particular order, is how we felt about each wheel.

ACT Labs Force RS

The Force RS is the most striking of all the wheels in the roundup. This sucker weighs a ton, and most of it's in the pedals. All racing system manufacturers, take note: ACT Labs is the only company to do the

pedals right! The wide base of the pedal set is weighted with a steel plate — this thing will not budge.

Once your back has recovered from lifting the box, you'll open it up to see the next startling feature: The grip. Made of something that strongly resembles leather, it's nicely padded and quite thick. Simply put, this wheel feels incredible.

Another unique aspect of this system is its adaptability to any gaming platform. The rear of the wheel houses a cartridge slot that lets you add attachments to hook the wheel up to any of the current major console systems — if, for some strange reason, you'd admit to enjoying console games.

The clamping system keeps the wheel firmly planted on your desk, provided it doesn't have a support beam near the edge. If yours does, you'll have to find another surface to clamp onto because the clamps won't work around it.

The only other complaint we had was with some of the buttons. Two of them take the form of a rocker behind the wheel, intended for shifting. While DirectInput compliant games will let you map them to anything you want, the rocker physically won't let you press both at the same time. An eight-way POV hat is located at the center of the wheel, unreachable without taking a hand off the wheel. Of the other seven buttons, six are located in thumb-friendly locations, but the last is on the bottom support bar, out of reasonable reach of any digit.

This wheel registered the strongest forces of any we tested. We thought our wrists were going to break while playing *Monster Truck Madness II*. That said, the force is still very realistic and, when it needs to be, dainty and precise. Just because it's powerful doesn't mean it's clunky.

The only thing missing is a programming interface, which is surprising considering ACT Labs' propensity to build programming options into their gaming devices.



A literal heavy-hitter, the faux leather ACT Labs Force RS registered the strongest forces.

www.actlab.com

PRICE	→ \$139.99
INTERFACE	→ SERIAL
GRIP	(out of 2.0) → 2.0
MOTION	(out of 1.5) → 1.4
FORCE EFFECTS	(out of 1.5) → 1.4
BUTTONS	(out of 1.0) → .7
CLAMP STURDINESS	(out of 1.0) → 1.0
CLAMP CONVENIENCE	(out of .5) → .2
PEDAL FEEL	(out of 1.0) → 1.0
PEDAL STABILITY	(out of .5) → .5
PROGRAMMING INTERFACE	(out of .5) → 0
BUNDLE	(out of .5) → .4

RATING → 8.6



CAR EQUIVALENT →
PORSCHE BOXSTER

AVB Top Shot Force Feedback Wheel

Hey, I know! Let's design a wheel that looks so cool, you people will buy it as soon as they see the box, without consulting any reviews!

Could such a conversation have taken place? It wouldn't take much to convince us. The look is definitely appealing; its sleek and futuristic design make it an ideal prop in the Starship Enterprise. Of course, those sleek, futuristic controls are just part of an elaborate TV studio set and aren't used to control a real spaceship. Likewise, the Top Shot shouldn't be used to control a real driving game.

SCORING SYSTEM

Each wheel was rated in ten categories, reflecting areas of strengths and weaknesses of design and implementation. The highest possible score in each category is weighted according to the importance of its aspect (a comfy grip is more important than a convenient clamping system, and so on). The scores are added for a total score for each wheel. The highest possible score is 10.

CATEGORIES

GRIP → The overall feel of the wheel in terms of comfort and, well, gripability. (Out of 2.0)

MOTION → How smooth and realistic the motion of the wheel feels. Too high a range of motion forces you to remove your hands to execute sharp turns; too little bleeds away precision. (Out of 1.5)

FORCE EFFECTS → The feel of the forces. Are they realistic? Engrossing? Or do they make you aware of the mechanisms within? (Out of 1.5)

BUTTONS AND OTHER CONTROLS → The more the merrier. They must be easy to reach but not easy enough to hit by accident. (1.0)

CLAMPING SYSTEM STURDINESS → Does the clamping system keep the wheel in place? (1.0)

CLAMPING SYSTEM CONVENIENCE → How much work does it take to place and remove this non-permanent (in theory) desk installation? Does it work around table supports? (.5)

PEDAL FEEL → How realistic do the pedals feel? Cheap plastic, or sturdy? (1.0)

PEDAL STABILITY → Do they stay in place, or migrate, forcing you to secure them with boxes or other stuff? (.5)

PROGRAMMABILITY → Is there a programming interface for non DirectInput compliant games? How good is it? (.5)

BUNDLE → Does the wheel come with any games? (.5)



The Joan Rivers model. Lots of plastic, and no real function.

The wheel isn't a wheel at all, but rather, a broken circle with the top arc missing. Thumb buttons cap the stumps on either side, but they're so easy to hit accidentally while turning the wheel that I ended up rendering them useless in the games' controller setups. That's unfortunate, because the other buttons all require you to take your hand off the wheel to access them. Four buttons are in the middle surrounding a POV hat, while the other two are on the right in the form of a shifter.

While the large and jointed pedals provide smooth motion, the base is so light, we had to place a box behind it to keep it from sliding.

Of all of the contenders, this wheel feels the worst. Made of smooth, molded plastic, it doesn't give the illusion of realism at all. To make matters worse, the force effects are jerky and clumsy, and it often registers imaginary, often distracting forces that none of the other wheels showed any sign of. In fact, the wheel vibrated relentlessly the entire time we played NFS3.

The harsh feedback is complicated by the flimsiest clamps we tested. They invariably worked themselves loose within 20 minutes after tightening them.

The only thing going for the Top Shot is the handy USB interface, and that ain't enough to sell the product. We wouldn't use this wheel to drive a used Yugo.

www.rvbtch.com

PRICE → \$119.98
INTERFACE → USB
GRIP (out of 2.0) → 4
MOTION (out of 1.5) → 9
FORCE EFFECTS (out of 1.5) → 6
BUTTONS (out of 1.0) → 1
CLAMP STURDINESS (out of 1.0) → 3
CLAMP CONVENIENCE (out of 5) → 1
PEDAL FEEL (out of 1.0) → 7
PEDAL STABILITY (out of 5) → 2
PROGRAMMING INTERFACE (out of 5) → 0
BUNDLE (out of 5) → 0

RATING → 3.3



CAR EQUIVALENT → FIERO

InterAct V4

This nifty wheel is the sleeper hit of the group. InterAct's hit-and-miss PC product lineup had us braced for something mediocre, and we're happy to say that in this instance we were way off.

The generous clamping mechanism will hold this wheel firm to even the thickest of surfaces, but there's still a little bit of play in the base. The reason? The wheel's column is adjustable, allowing you to change the height and tilt of the wheel to your preference. A more stable locking system would have been appreciated, though.

The wheel itself feels more like a real steering wheel than all the others. Its strong, rubber grip is perfect, and most of the generous quantity of buttons (there are 11, plus a POV hat) are within easy reach. Of all of the wheels that have shifters, the sturdy metal ones on the InterAct V4 have the best tactile feel.

A powerful, centering mechanism makes this wheel better for non-force-feedback games than the others. The forces themselves feel a bit clunky and lack the smooth, natural feel of the ACT Labs and Logitech wheels.

The pedals are above average, and the brake is a bit firmer than the accelerator, to mimic a real

car. Unfortunately, the base is way too light, and tends to migrate away from you as you play.

www.interact-acc.com

PRICE → \$129.99
INTERFACE → GAMEPORT
GRIP (out of 2.0) → 2.0
MOTION (out of 1.5) → 1.4
FORCE EFFECTS (out of 1.5) → 1.0
BUTTONS (out of 1.0) → 9
CLAMP STURDINESS (out of 1.0) → 1.0
CLAMP CONVENIENCE (out of 5) → 4
PEDAL FEEL (out of 1.0) → 9
PEDAL STABILITY (out of 5) → 1
PROGRAMMING INTERFACE (out of 5) → 4
BUNDLE (out of 5) → 0

RATING → 8.1



CAR EQUIVALENT → MERCEDES

Logitech WingMan Formula Force

Logitech's grips are comfier than lying naked in a vat of jello.

If you're as impressed with the trademark joystick grip that's made this company's sticks so popular, you'll love the wheel. It ain't realistic, and you wouldn't find anything like it in a car, but we don't care. The rubber-coated grip is the most comfy of the group. Hell, it's fun just to sit and hold the wheel, much less play games with it—that is, until you try a game. Like this

WingMan Force joystick, this wheel has the most natural, convincing force effects available. Able to create subtle vibrations and massive convulsions with ease, the WingMan Formula Force feels perfect. Nothing here will bring motors or gears to mind; it's as if the wheel's motion is controlled with psychic forces. This is the smoothest, creamiest force feedback controller available.

The button situation is a bit skimpy, but adequate. Four thumb buttons are within easy reach, and two butterfly shifter levers reside behind the wheel. But they could have been farther back, as if you don't leave much room for chubby fingers, and if you remove and replace your hands during heated racing action, it's easy to trip the shifters by accident.

Because this wheel is so massively impressive, our hearts were shattered when we looked at the pedals. The wide base makes them perfectly stable, but the pedals themselves are pathetic, skimpy little afterthoughts. They feel as much like car pedals as a picnic bench feels like a bucket seat. Why, oh why, couldn't Logitech have put any effort into them?

The clamps are nice, and Logitech's WingMan software is the best profiling software available. Decent pedals would have made the Logitech WingMan Formula Force as close to perfect as could be reasonably expected.

www.logitech.com

PRICE → \$179.95
INTERFACE → SERIAL (USB AVAILABLE)
GRIP (out of 2.0) → 2.0
MOTION (out of 1.5) → 1.4
FORCE EFFECTS (out of 1.5) → 1.5
BUTTONS (out of 1.0) → 6
CLAMP STURDINESS (out of 1.0) → 1.0
CLAMP CONVENIENCE (out of 5) → 4
PEDAL FEEL (out of 1.0) → 5
PEDAL STABILITY (out of 5) → 5
PROGRAMMING INTERFACE (out of 5) → 5
BUNDLE (out of 5) → 5

RATING → 8.9



CAR EQUIVALENT → FERRARI



Though it moves around a bit, InterAct got it mostly right.



Yeah, yeah, you've seen it before. If the Wingman wasn't a damn good wheel, we wouldn't have run this photo in three issues ...



... too bad the pedals kinda suck.

DEMONSTRATION #2:

- 1 Tear out your old sound card.
- 2 Smash into pieces.
- 3 Toss over your shoulder.

► The sound those pieces make when they hit the ground all *around* you is the power of A3D from Aureal, the only audio that works the way your ears do.

That's why leading sound card vendors, such as Diamond, TerraTec, Turtle Beach, and Xitel, are using Vortex audio technology from Aureal, the only 3D audio accelerator that supports industry leading A3D positional audio technology.

You can also find A3D positional audio on computer models from the industry's leading PC manufacturers.

Audio based on Aureal technology is awesome. But don't take our word for it. Believe Your Ears. Check out A3D at your local retailer.



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Go to <http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411>: Product Number 20



You too can have Microsoft's mediocre wheel — for \$200+.

Microsoft SideWinder Force Feedback Racing Wheel

Every popular product has a baseline. Let's take beer, for example. It's widely agreed that Budweiser is the baseline of beer: Every beer is either better than Bud or worse than Bud.

The Microsoft SideWinder Force Feedback Racing Wheel is the baseline of force feedback wheels: It's adequate in every way. While it doesn't come up short, nothing about it is outstanding — except the price.

The grip is nicely molded, the sides are rubberized, and the top and bottom, for some reason, are molded plastic. Six thumb buttons are well placed, but the two trigger buttons are a little too easy to press accidentally.

The one truly superior aspect of Microsoft's system is the quick release clamping system. Pop that sucker on, adjust the tension, and slam the clamp shut. You never have to turn another screw.

Like the company's SideWinder Force Feedback joystick, you're acutely aware of the motors inside this wheel. It's loud and feels very mechanical. Nonetheless, they're accurate and strong.

The pedals are decent, and even with their light base they don't slide around too much. The tension is a bit tight, which can make for sore calves.

www.microsoft.com/hardware/

PRICE → \$209.99
 INTERFACE → GAMEPORT
 GRIP (out of 2.0) → 1.6
 MOTION (out of 1.0) → 1.3
 FORCE EFFECTS (out of 1.0) → .7
 BUTTONS (out of 1.0) → .6
 CLAMP STURDINESS (out of 1.0) → 1.0
 CLAMP CONVENIENCE (out of 1.0) → .5
 PEDAL FEEL (out of 1.0) → .6
 PEDAL STABILITY (out of 1.0) → .4
 PROGRAMMING INTERFACE (out of 1.0) → .5
 BUNDLE (out of 1.0) → .5

RATING → 7.7



CAR EQUIVALENT →
 HONDA ACCORD

Saitec R4 Force Wheel

Saitec is quickly gaining a reputation as a creative company with unique products, and this wheel is no exception. First off, there's the wheel itself. A rubber grip coats the left and right extremes of this funky shaped wheel, but the rest is plastic. Though the shape is weird, it's possible to get used to it quickly.

The coolest thing about the R4 is the pedal system. Though it's light and prone to traveling away, it's the only set whose tension is adjustable. Saitec includes a special adjustment tool, housed in a compartment in the wheel column.

...AND THE WINNERS ARE...

BEST WHEEL

LOGITECH WINGMAN FORMULA FORCE
 With the Logitech WingMan Formula Force and the ACT Labs Force RS vying for this coveted award, this was a painful decision, and it didn't help that their scores were so close. Their grips and general feel, though very different, are both outstanding. Though Logitech's pedals are crappy, the bottom line really came down to the better force effects — after all, this is a force feedback wheel roundup. In that sense, Logitech's wheel outshines ACT Labs' — but just barely. Consider the Force RS a damn close runner up in what amounts to a photo finish.

BEST BARGAIN

ACT LABS FORCE RS
 At a mere \$139.99, it's second only to the top winner Best Wheel which costs a full \$40 more. Runner up: InterACT's V4. Force gives you the most buttons, the most realistic grip, and the only adjustable base — for a measly \$29.

CLAMP AWARD

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER FORCE FEEDBACK RACING WHEEL
 Microsoft got it right this time with a quick release clamp that's both fast and sturdy, and provides plenty of room to work around table supports. There's no runner up in this category, as none of the other clamps are nearly as impressive.



A box of gimmicky goodness.

The clamp is sturdy and convenient, and holds the wheel firmly to any table or desk. Unfortunately, Saitec's force feedback portion of the wheel is based on Microsoft technology, so it's got the same loud, mechanical feel of the MS wheel. That also means it's accurate and precise, though, so all but subtle and strong forces are performed with ease.

All of the buttons are well placed, including two thumb buttons, two butterfly triggers, and a two-way shifter on the right side of the wide base, although toggling the shifter forces you to take your hand off the wheel.

The unique touches make this an interesting wheel, worthy of a look by gadget heads who like cool-looking goofy stuff. The price is a bit out of line with the others, though, so unless you like to impress your friends with funky gadgets, you're probably better off checking into more superior, less expensive models.

www.saitec.com

PRICE → \$199.95
 INTERFACE → GAMEPORT
 GRIP (out of 2.0) → 1.5
 MOTION (out of 1.0) → 1.3
 FORCE EFFECTS (out of 1.0) → .7
 BUTTONS (out of 1.0) → .9
 CLAMP STURDINESS (out of 1.0) → 1.0
 CLAMP CONVENIENCE (out of 1.0) → .5
 PEDAL FEEL (out of 1.0) → 1.0
 PEDAL STABILITY (out of 1.0) → .1
 PROGRAMMING INTERFACE (out of 1.0) → .4
 BUNDLE (out of 1.0) → 0

RATING → 7.4



CAR EQUIVALENT →
 DELOREAN

BUNDLES

Software that's bundled with hardware tends to change frequently, which is part of the reason that we didn't give much scoring weight to the bundle. (The other reason is, you probably already own a bunch of games, anyway.) Here is what was bundled with each of the wheels at the time this was written:

ACT LABS FORCE RS →

F1 Racing Simulation

AVB FORCE FEEDBACK WHEEL →
Monaco Grand Prix 2, Speed Buster Demo

INTERACT V4 → No bundled games

LOGITECH WINGMAN

Formula Force → F1 Racing Simulation, Motorhead

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER →

Monster Truck Madness II, CART Precision Racing

SAITEC R4 → No bundled games

BEST PEDALS

ACT LABS FORCE RS

ACT Labs was the only company to add enough weight to their pedals to make damn sure they aren't going to migrate, plus they're shaped like a real accelerator and break pedal. Runner-Up: Saitec's pedals, the only ones with adjustable tension.

BEST GIMMICK

SAITEC R4 FORCE WHEEL

Not only are the pedals adjustable, but it was just plain cool to include a special tool in its own little compartment. Runner-Up: InterACT's adjustable steering column, which could have taken this award, had the locks been sturdier.

BEST DRINKING AND DRIVING WHEEL

ACT LABS FORCE RS

When you've been tossing back beers and shots for the last couple of hours you need a wheel that can take some punishment. The Force RS is about as heavy as Rosie O'Donnell, but the sturdy pedals and clamps make it the only wheel that can survive head-on collisions.

WORST WHEEL

AVB FORCE FEEDBACK RACING WHEEL
 It seems like the designers were going more for a catchy box than a decent racing experience. This wheel was so far off the mark, there's no runner up in this category.

MOST OVERPRICED

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER

FORCE FEEDBACK RACING WHEEL
 Microsoft may be a big name (the biggest really), and the stuffed shirts are probably confident that their wheel would sell without bias on its name alone. We at PCXL see that differently, though, and we wouldn't pay half the \$200 for this wheel. So get on your ties, and get back to work. We ain't buying! Runner-up: Though we like the uniqueness of Saitec's system, its price puts it out of competition with the others.

WORST PEDALS

LOGITECH WINGMAN FORMULA FORCE
 Who would have thought that Logitech, winner in the Best Wheel category, could have the worst pedals of all? Do you see a pattern here? Attention developers, don't forget about the damn pedals! The Runners-up: Every single other contender, with the exception of ACT Labs and Saitec.

SILLIEST GIMMICK

AVB FORCE FEEDBACK RACING WHEEL
 The AVB wheel takes this one, too, with its trying-way-too-hard-to-be-cool "broken wheel" design. This term is "steering wheel," folks, not "steering three quarter circle." It looks like whoever designed this stupid thing forgot to put the top on. Congratulations, you're the hands-down winner! Sincere note: none of the other gimmicks were nearly as ridiculous, in our books, there's no runner up.

Barbarians at the Gate

How 3Dfx lost the plot, and quite possibly its future as the leader in the 3D accelerator wars.

Just a year ago, the 3D acceleration industry belonged fully and completely to 3Dfx. Its Voodoo 2 technology was the clear leader in high-end gamer sales, its proprietary API — Glide — was leaps beyond any competition, and the company had a clear lead in technology over all the other manufacturers. But one area still eluded 3Dfx's grasp: The lucrative OEM market.

While 3Dfx was making a killing in the gamer market, S3 and ATI were lining their pockets selling underpowered "wussy" cards such as the S3 Virge to computer manufacturers. Envious of their success, 3Dfx set out to do the unthinkable: Make a chipset to control the OEM and, at the same time, dominate the high-end gamer market.

Voodoo 3 was supposed to be the solution. The company would release two (now three) different versions of the card that would cover the entire spectrum of the market. It might have worked, but somewhere along the line, 3Dfx lost its edge.

The rumblings began when Voodoo 3 was announced to the press. While the company blissfully revealed its plans, onlookers were skeptical and questions were not sufficiently answered. "Why does the card only feature 16-bit color and 256 x 256K texture resolutions?" (Answer: Gamers only care about frame rates) "Why has 3Dfx abandoned the concept of SLI?" (Answer: It's impossible with AGP cards) "Has the drive to capture the OEM market with cheap chipsets held the overall technology back?" (Answer: No one can catch us)

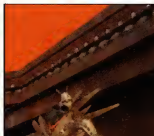
Like a pack of angry wolves, the competition circled, licking their chops. Nvidia announced the TNT2 and its ability to render in 32-bit color depths, take advantage of AGP 2X, and use detailed textures up to 2048 X 2048K while still maintaining a frame rate near that of the Voodoo 3.

Soon ATI's Rage Fury hit the market with excellent image quality and amazing frame rates, while S3 debuted 53TC (S3 Texture Compression), enabling developers to include ultra-high detail textures in their games. In short, these hungry companies made it painfully clear that 3Dfx had lost its place as the most innovative 3D technology house.

To make matters worse, card manufacturers such as Diamond, Guillemot and Creative Labs (all a major factor in 3Dfx's early success), were left out in the cold by 3Dfx's decision to buy STB and sell its boards exclusively through that arrangement. Before long, the manufacturers actively pursued alternatives, and those that once touted Voodoo, quickly and proudly began to evangelize the competing technologies.

But these technologies were still not enough to dethrone 3Dfx as the high-end standard for gamers. It took an aggressive (and downright driven) company — Metabyte — to complete the revolution. Metabyte introduced a technology it called Wicked Stepsister (see boxouts), which proved 3Dfx's stance to be shortsighted by linking two TNT cards (even an AGP and PCI version) together. The technology could also work with any chipset (including Voodoo 3), but because of 3Dfx's desire to control their own distribution, the technology will most likely be seen in almost every chipset — except the Voodoo 3.

So what does all this mean for 3Dfx? It likely means that by the time Voodoo 3 debuts, it will be in the shadow of Wicked Stepsister versions of competing technologies. Where the company once enjoyed a clear technological lead from generation to generation of chipset, it now sees competitors passing it by. 3Dfx may build itself a comfortable niche in the OEM market, but that place may cost its dominance in the high-end gamer's market forever. ➤



Q3A will even test the power of a dual TNT2 configuration.



THE WICKED STEPSISTER

How do you take a small, unknown technology company and put it to the forefront of the 3D card industry? It takes innovation, risk and some excellent engineers. For a case in point look at Metabyte. This small company was absolutely rocked when 3Dfx announced it would handle Voodoo 3 sales on its own. In response, Metabyte developed a technology that promises to step beyond even what the Voodoo 3 is capable of. Here is a brief synopsis of what the card can do:

MAKE SEVERAL CARDS RUN AS ONE → StepSister technology does not use the SLI (Scan Line Interface) technology that powered multiple Voodoo 2 cards, but instead uses each card to render half of the screen. This enables two cards to work together on a single image. Using this setup, you can expect to see performance leaps of 40 percent for low resolutions and upwards of 60 percent for high-resolution games. It is also conceivable that you could link more than two cards together for even more improved performance.

WORK WITH ANY 3D CARD → Metabyte can adapt this technology to work with any existing or upcoming 3D chipset. In fact, because of the technology, the company could link two different card types together. (Because of licensing and differing image quality, don't expect to see this, however.)

UPGRADE YOUR CARD → You won't need two new 3D cards. If you have an existing TNT card you will be able to install a second without much difficulty.

SINK THE VOODOO 3 → By the time the TNT2 hits stores, Metabyte will likely already have a deal in the works for a StepSister upgrade. Two TNT2s will be faster than a single Voodoo 3, and by default, the fastest configuration on the market.

WICKEDER STEPSISTERS

Our picks for the best, evil, yet babe-ish stepsisters



ALICIA SILVERSTONE
FAMILY RELATIONS → The ultra-rich Cleo-less clan
WHY SHE'S WICKED → Made the moves on her stepbrother



DANA PLATO
FAMILY RELATIONS → The dirty debutante daughter on "Different Strokes"
WHY SHE'S WICKED → She led her onscreen stepbrothers into a life of crime



MARCIA BRADY
FAMILY RELATIONS → Blonde bombshell beauty of the "Brady Bunch"
WHY SHE'S WICKED → Wanted to make the moves on stepbrother (good for Greg)

MORTYR

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CHANGE
THE PAST!*

*"Wolfenstein 3D with
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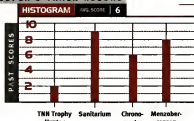
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Werewolf: The Heart of Gaia

Making light of the World of Darkness

In an industry increasingly dominated by franchises, licenses and other paraphernalia ensuring a game's public recognition value and commercial success, it's refreshing to see developers still dedicated to creating a brand-new gaming experience. DreamForge Entertainment, holed up in Greensburg, PA, and still reeling from the critical success of *Sanitarium*, has



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → DreamForge
 PUBLISHER → ASC Games
 RELEASE DATE → September '99
 3D SUPPORT → Glide, Direct 3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Werewolf table top has a following, plus the *Unreal* engine and its astounding graphical powers.

THE HURDLE

TNN Trophy Hunter was DreamForge's first foray with the *Unreal* engine. They'll have learned a lot, but how much?

THE HIT

DreamForge's rep with roleplaying games, massive following, and proven engine seem to be the perfect combination.

both a license — White Wolf's *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* pen-and-paper roleplaying system, and the engine — Epic's *Unreal* — to put to use in a third- and first-person action/RPG: *Werewolf: The Heart of Gaia*.

A dedication to storytelling is at the heart of White Wolf's World of Darkness game setting. So while writer Chris Pasetto's story will encompass the range of moral, social, and psychological paths that the pen-and-paper game aims to encourage, for the purposes of the PC game, *Werewolf: THOG* will have a strong action bias.

DreamForge's decision to make *Werewolf* primarily a third-person

game makes a lot of sense. For starters, there's the morph engine that fits neatly into the *Unreal* engine and provides a great visual of the change between the three forms of Werewolf that the game uses. From the normal human (Homid) form you can change into *Crinos* form (a humanoid wolf, standing 10 feet tall, with sharp claws and a bad attitude) and the smaller, more nimble wolf (*Lupus*) form. Changes can be made at any time, to any form, and the effect is really cool. Likewise, the bane of third-person games seems to have been overcome by using a translucent effect on your character whenever the camera moves ▶ p. 54



The three stages of lycanthropy: Homid, Crinos, and Lupus.



Morphing is achieved by stretching the Homid model.



A concept sketch of a *Black Spiral Labyrinth* level. All the level designers are also artists, so they can create the textures they want for best effect in the levels they design.

FIVE QUESTIONS

WEREWOLF'S PROJECT LEAD, JANE YEAGER NOEL, PUT HERSELF IN THE FIRING LINE KNOWN AS THE FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: How many actual Werewolves work on the game? (And remember, I've met them!)

A: The programming tribe consists of 5, the level tribe has 6 werewolves. And the art tribe has 9.

Q: What's the single biggest goal you have in creating a game in the *Werewolf* universe?

A: White Wolf's World of Darkness is rich in atmosphere and story. We want to be very true to their dark, gothic-punk world — yet keep it accessible to action players.

Q: Should I bother to mention the *Vampire* game?

A: *Vampire* will be a very different game than ours.

Q: Exactly how "bad" is bad Travis?

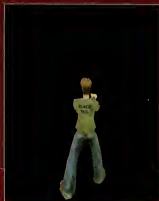
A: Bad Travis? Travis isn't "bad."

Q: So, honestly, your thoughts on Greensburg, PA?

A: Greensburg is in the "boonies", but there is a tremendous pool of talented people who want to make fun, cool games.

Werewolf Gallery

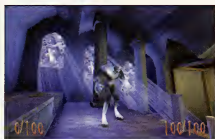
Werewolf: THOG will have 30 different creatures, of which 17 will have those crazy morphing effects. So when you see a little girl, there's a good chance there'll be more to her than meets the eye.



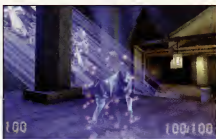


To make third-person combat easier to control, DreamForge has added a "Z-look" function, very similar to that used in the N64 *Zeido*. It means that when holding down one button you will always be facing your enemy for the duration of the duel. Evidently not afraid to borrow good ideas from other games, the end-of-level gifts work perfectly for the *Werewolf* setting, but also offer a cursory nod to the Force progression in LucasArts' *Jedi Knight*.





The single-player game will cover five stages and 59 levels of varying sizes.



Morphing into Lupus, your character goes translucent so the level remains clear.



Confused? You certainly will be in the ethereal "Umbræ."

▶ p. 51 dynamically to a point that may blur your vision.

The third-person also works well for melee combat. While in human form your character, a young punk kid named Ryan McCullough, can use about five familiar weapons. In Cronis form he has his claws, teeth and a sword called a Klavie. Get hold of a Great Klavie and you can start counting yourself among the exalted ranks of bad-ass werewolves. Combat is still being tweaked, but utilizes your directional movement to determine what kind of slashing attack is

made. In Lupus form you have your teeth, but the ability to move extremely fast is the most vital commodity, along with the ability to follow scent trails.

Ryan McCullough is unfortunate enough to carry the gene of the White Howler clan of werewolves. In the opening of the game, Ryan has his first transformation. Discovering that you're a ten-foot bad-ass, with slaving jaws and razor sharp claws, is not the kind of thing you can forget.

Modern world locations are used (London, Greece, Mexico and the US) as Ryan fights his own personal demons, grows to understand what being a Garou means (what werewolves call themselves), how to defeat the corrupt Pentex corporation, and in doing so assuage the onslaught of the Wyrm. Explaining the ethereal properties of the Wyld, the Wyrm, and the Weave (the three controlling entities of the universe), would take a book on its own (available via White Wolf's web site at www.white-wolf.com).

For the purposes of the PC game, the rules of the pen-and-paper game have been "adjusted to fit." Werewolves earn "gifts" or "totems" as they gain experience (or glory) and it's in the awarding of these gifts that werewolf can really shine, as the game tracks how you act and hands out selectable gifts based on consistent roleplay. So, should you slaughter all NPC "innocents" in the early game, and then start being nice to them later, you'll not score the same glory points as you would for maintaining a consistent character focus.

In the spirit of the pen-and-paper game there are also plenty of puzzles. For example, Ryan has to get to one point in human form, then jump in Cronis form to reach a small tunnel. Then, he must morph, mid-jump, into Lupus form in order to fit through the tunnel. The real world settings exhibit fine looking uses of the *Unreal* engine, but the strongest part is "The Umbræ." This is the spirit world of the Garou, and Ryan must enter it

as he faces the conclusion of his battle. As Pasetto explained, "In the Umbræ, things are different and so they should look very different." That concept has been addressed with vigor in the Black Labyrinth levels, which highlight a familiarity with Escher-esque confusion. They look and feel weird, and will likely play suitably different.

Incorporating all the diverse elements of the World of Darkness is an epic task, and DreamForge has managed to use just a few of the 13 werewolf clans. But the real selling point for *Werewolf: THO* is in its blending of the roleplaying world, the psychological trauma of understanding werewolf culture, and the brutal action possible within the *Unreal* engine. They're certainly on track with sensible ideas and unobtrusive design that could show other developers what they should be doing with their third-person gameplay. In *Werewolf*, DreamForge has another potential winner on its hands. ▶

—ROB SMITH is not a werewolf

CELEBRITY WOLVES



Werewolves are all around us — here are just a few

TEEN WOLF WOLF TRAITS: Dunks basketballs, wooz chicks, and changes from Michael J. Fox to Jason Bateman

WHAT HE HOWLS AT: Prom night, travelling violations, and really heavy high school checks
VULNERABLE TO: A good script



WOLFMAN JACK WOLF TRAITS: Howling, hairy palms

WHAT HE HOWLS AT: Howls "Have Mercy!" before playing "Muskrat Love"

VULNERABLE TO: Foods that are high in fat and arbutron ratings



ROBIN WILLIAMS WOLF TRAITS: His hair is hairier than Paula Cole's armpits

WHAT HE HOWLS AT: His own Pe-3 jingles and his count; so inspiring movies about making a difference

VULNERABLE TO: Cocaine rehab — hasn't been funny since he stopped snorting



WOLF BLITZER WOLF TRAITS: His name, his full facial beard, and his volatile nature

WHAT HE HOWLS AT: Patrice Missiles

VULNERABLE TO: "Picks on earth. No war — no wolf



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EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

HISTOGRAM



WHO ARE THEY?

The FASA *MW2* license was given to Zipper Interactive because of the funky 3D graphics engine they'd developed. Aside from mammoth Mech combat, salvage details have been upgraded, with a Mobile Field Base. But at its core, *MW3* maintains the mantra of providing gigantic robots that destroy other gigantic robots.

Mechwarrior 3

Bigger is better. Whoda think it?

When it comes to science fiction simulations, Activision's *Mechwarrior 2* is simply one of the greatest games ever created. Neither *Heavy Gear*, nor *Mech: Mercenaries* were able to surpass it, and no other company has come close to the sheer spectacle of the game that took the popular war-torn FASA

world into the realm of PC stardom. But finally, after three years of waiting, the true sequel is almost upon us.

Mechwarrior 3 is the real deal for BattleTech fans. Taking place in 3060, *Mechwarrior 3* continues the saga sometime after *MW2: Mercenaries*. After years of strife and war, the Houses of the Inner Sphere have finally managed to

form an alliance to bring on the destruction of the Smoke Jaguar Clan. When the Jaguars refuse to admit defeat, you must lead a Commando Force to infiltrate and destroy the last traces of the clan.

The important question is "what's new?" One of the coolest new additions is the ability to press a button and get an instant mini-zoom screen on your HUD, making long range precision combat far more effective. You'll even be able to auto-target specific parts of a Mech, and crouch behind the scenery for cover.

Controls in the beta build we played were likely to be pretty familiar for Mech veterans (you know, the guys with 11 fingers). Though they seem faster and more

maneuverable this time, don't expect anything in the way of *Heavy Gear*-like strafing. The Mechs have a great sense of weight and power, and a much enhanced sense of speed when the throttle is pushed to the max, making combat intensely fast-paced without ever degrading to the level of a mindless first-person shooter (if you call that degrading). You'll also command up to three other "lanternmates," and have the ability to give them attack and defend orders. Enemies and allies can carry out their own mission objectives and make decisions based on how the battle is progressing.

There will be 18 Mechs in the game and extensive Mech Shop options for customizing your robot



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Zipper Interactive
 PUBLISHER → Hasbro Interactive
 RELEASE DATE → May '99
 API SUPPORT → Glide, Direct3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

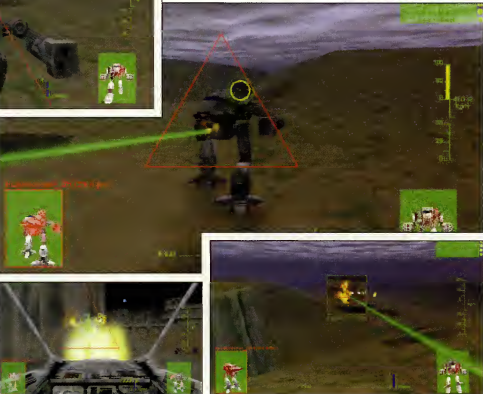
FASA's license and the legacy of the *Mechwarrior 2* series, and the promise of (finally) building a better Mech than the original.

THE HURDLE

Heavy Gear 2 and *Starsiege* make the shelves awfully crowded. And, there's all those old versions of *MW2* still around.

THE HIT

Fans of *MW2* will probably love its design and gameplay. And, it's the only really well-known Big Robot license.



I'm just a sniper, campin' sorta guy. And if ya give me any more lip, I'm blowing off the other arm!

FIVE QUESTIONS

WE PLUGGED JIM BOSLER, PRESIDENT OF ZIPPER INTERACTIVE, ABOUT MECHWARRIOR 3 TO SEE WHAT HIS TOLERANCE LEVEL WAS.

Q: We all love water sports, especially when it involves blowing stuff up. What's the water situation in *Mechwarrior 3* like?

A: The water can be a useful hiding place — a Mech can stand in arm-high water and then crouch to completely submerge and wait for an enemy to pass by before launching a surprise attack.

Q: One can't help but notice a complete lack of babes in these big robot games. Has *MW3* done anything to alleviate this obvious oversight?

A: Well, for one thing, the weapons are so large and powerful, and the effects so incredible, what woman wouldn't be driven to a frenzy by watching a real man maneuver his Mech around the battlefield? In the BattleTech Universe, beautiful and intelligent women frequently pilot Mechs. In *MW3*, the women often fight topless when things get hot inside their Mechs. It's just kind of hard to see through their thick windshields.

Q: Honestly, did you really need three hands to play *MW2*? And what's the preferred method of control over at Zipper for controlling your Mech in *MW3*?

A: We have worked hard to increase the intuitive play control, while maintaining all the sim elements. First choice at Zipper is joystick, then mouse. Nearly every one plays from the cockpit perspective.

Q: Will there be editing tools for creating new missions and/or campaigns?

A: The Instant Action mode allows the player the variety and fun of controlling the key elements of the missions, without involving him in the high complexity of actually having to build them from scratch. The player can choose one of four terrain types and then one of four mission strategies. The player can select any combination of Mech types of up to four for himself and his lance mates and up to six for his opposition. The player may also configure all his Mech and those of his lance mates, using MechLab.

Q: What compromises in the FASA tabletop game system had to be made to adjust it for this very different medium?

A: Close attention has been paid to all of the BattleTech parameters. The BattleTech Technical Compendiums were strictly adhered to for Mechs, vehicles, Elementals, weapons and other critical information.



One of the more agile mechs is attempting the splits — we think.

to suit your tastes and play styles. *Mechwarrior 3* is scheduled to sport 20 missions for the main single-player campaign, along with 16 more instant action missions, 8 multiplayer arenas, and a set of training missions. The missions run the usual line of seek and destroy, base security, and escorts, but the design has an emphasis on nail-biting action.

There's also an expansion pack already in the works, due for Christmas, that Hasbro states will "greatly enhance the multiplayer game." Whether or not this means that multiplayer will suck out of the box isn't clear, but the full game will sport deathmatch and teams modes with eight-player LAN and net support, along with modem play.

Visually, Zipper's new engine looks to be well worth the *MW* name. Missiles hit the ground leaving huge craters in their wake, and the sheer level of detail on the robots is commendable. Fry them with a laser beam and watch the beam's tip burn scars into the hull,

or blow away a Mech's Rocket Launcher or arm and see wires dangling pathetically in its place.

Mechwarrior 3's audio quality is extremely impressive as well. The deep booming thump of Mech foot-steps as you run across the landscape, combined with the in-depth sounds of battle proved incredibly immersive. The battle-hardened, almost classical soundtrack also seems top-notch so far.

Currently due to stomp through the neighborhood in May, *Mechwarrior 3* is almost done and looks very solid. Sharp graphics, great sound, and familiar playability all seem to be coming together for Zipper. It's unlikely that it's going to make gamers who didn't like *MW2* change their minds about big robotic combat, but should definitely prove a welcome sight for fans of the FASA series.

— JASON D'APRILE feels that if *Rab Smith* can coll Dalkatana the best game of '99 then he can coll *Mechwarrior 2* one of the greatest games ever made



As for the screenshot on the left ... uh ... we have no comment ...

MECH HEROES

SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN
WHO IS HE? → Colonel Steve

Austin, an astronaut, was reborn using an amazing robotic technology called bionics

CATCH-PHRASE → "I'm the unknown stunt man"
LOVE INTEREST → The bionic woman — duh
HEROIC MOMENT → When he got down on his bionic knees and begged Oscar to save Jamie Sommers with bionics



JOHNNY #5

WHO IS HE? → Wise-crackin' hunk of scrap metal from the classically horrible movie *Short Circuit* who just wanted to be human

CATCH-PHRASE → "Johnny 5, alive!"
LOVE INTEREST → Ally Sheedy
HEROIC MOMENT → Sacrificed himself to save Ally Sheedy, only to find her continually checked into the Betty Ford clinic

THE TIN MAN

WHO IS HE? → The heartless tin wussie who skipped merrily down the yellow brick road

CATCH-PHRASE → "If I only had a heart"
LOVE INTEREST → Dorothy — you know he wanted to lay some pipe, so to speak
HEROIC MOMENT → When he risks his life to save young Dorothy, showing that he had a heart all along

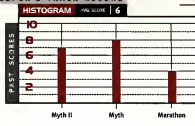
TWINK

WHO IS HE? → Buck Rodgers' robot sidekick with an "attitude"

CATCH-PHRASE → "Biddy, biddy, biddy — eat lead wuzer!"
LOVE INTEREST → Gold covered version of himself
HEROIC MOMENT → Being in Erin Gray's bedroom might not have been heroic, but it's something we all wanted to do



DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Oni

Kinoko — the next third-person uber-babe game character?

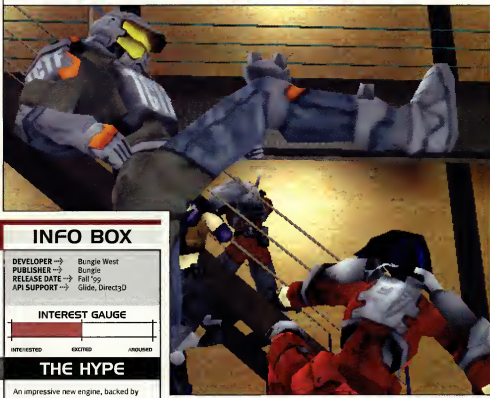
Japanese anime is a tricky business. The movies do phenomenally well, the comics sell, and the characters have spawned numerous console-based video games, but the style has yet to break through on the PC. Bungie is known for taking an innovative route with familiar genres (ask any Mac owner who's played first-person shooter

Marathon). *Myth* was a great twist on more familiar RTS games, and now comes *Oni*, an action-based third-person adventure.

Inspired by the art style of the anime movie, *Ghost in the Shell*, Bungie's West Coast development team has been working on the project since April 1997. By January 1998, the four-person team had increased to 10 and the game

started to take shape as the animation system gave life to Kinoko, the crime-fighting lead character (chosen to be female, they say, for speed and agility, rather than an opportunity to draw a tight ass).

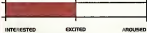
In true anime tradition, the characters are all motivated by deep-seated psychological trauma — "Oni" means "ghosts" or "demons." Naturally, the psy-



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Bungie West
 PUBLISHER → Bungie
 RELEASE DATE → Fall '99
 API SUPPORT → Glide, DirectX3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

An impressive new engine, backed by detailed AI — a third-person action/adventure with anime-influenced action.

THE HURDLE

Getting the anime style mainstream acceptance. Bungie's games have been critical, not commercial, successes.

THE HIT

Anime-inspired games could be on the rise (*Shogun*, *Slave Zero*). *Oni* is a familiar concept for fans of the genre.

A couple of professionally trained architects are building believable corporate locations in *Oni*'s proprietary engine.

BABES THAT KICK ASS

We're all for strong female characters that showcase "girl power" — especially when they're hot. Here is a look at some other babes that can do more than just look good



Buffy



Trish & Louise



Corinne Corcoran



Thelma & Louise

THELMA & LOUISE ASS-KICKING

CREDENTIALS → Went on a spree where they beat-up, humiliated, and killed all kinds of insanely ignorant men
BABE CREDENTIALS → Thelma is getting a bit long in the tooth for our taste, but Louise and lesbian fantasies qualify this pairing

CYNTHIA ROTHROCK ASS-KICKING

CREDENTIALS → Bona fide martial artist who has strutted her stuff in such straight-to-video classics as *Blond Justice* and several flicks with the words "fury" and "honor" in the title
BABE CREDENTIALS → A bit mannish at times, but hard body and available nudes are always a plus

ZSA ZSA GABOR ASS-KICKING

CREDENTIALS → Known to beat up police officers, or at least slap them silly
BABE CREDENTIALS → Nowadays Miss Gabor is far removed from babedom, but take a look at this picture and you'll see why she appeared in *Playboy* back in 1997

FIVE QUESTIONS

ONI'S LEAD DESIGNER BRENT PEASE CAST A CAUTIOUS EYE OVER THE IRREVRENT FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q. PKXL hasn't been the biggest fan of third-person action games. Why will it work for *Oni*?

A. I think it all boils down to the fact that no third-person game has achieved the responsive controls that you get in a good FPS, the controls you need for a quality action game. I don't believe any other third-person PC game has used interpolation in its animations, and that makes all the difference. When Kinoko goes smoothly from a dive-roll, into a kick, into a back flip, she's doing something unique in games.

Q. How many anime films have you sat through during the development cycle?

A. All of them. No kidding. The lead artist was in Japan over the holidays and wrote up a quick list of the films and TV shows that come to mind when he thinks about quality anime:

- 1: *Evangelion* — All the TV series and the movies
- 2: "BeBop" — One of the best current TV series, it's like "That 70's Show" in a future anime world
- 3: "Tri-Gun" TV series — Yash the Stampede is my hero
- 4: "Gao Gar Gar" — A kid's show in Japan but the animation quality is supreme!
- 5: *Macross Plus* and the rest of the *Macross* movies
- 6: "Nadesico" (Ruri being the coolest character on the show)
- 7: "Bubblegum Crisis & AD Police" — can't wait to see the current TV series! (Note that AIC, the company that did "Bubblegum Crisis," also did the cutscenes for *Myth II*.)
- 8: "Urusei Yatsura" TV series & Manga — she could fly and had cool blue/green hair. Tiger-striped bikini and knee-high boots helped too.
- 9: "Dragon Ball" (always a classic)
- 10: "AT Votoms"

Q. What's the best?

A. As much as we'd like to claim that some obscure anime that only we've heard of is the best in the world, the truth is *Ghost in the Shell* wins.

Q. Is the game engine designed to be used for future projects, or is it an *Oni* shot deal?

A. It's intended as an *Oni*-specific engine. As we noted, with architects making the levels originally in CAD we won't be publishing the tools with this game (unless we figure out a really clever bundle).

Q. Any other multiplayer styles planned, other than straight death-match (and will it be played over *bungie.net*)?

A. Yes, though it's still a little early to commit to many of them. There will be a King of the Hill, possibly a Capture the Flag and we're looking into making a new game type as well.



chodrama allows for all manner of wild twists and turns in a plot that aims to capture the real essence of the anime cartoons and movies.

What was highlighted during an early demonstration of *Oni*'s technology was the fluidity of the animation system, and melee beat 'em up action. Over 400 character animations give Kinoko a vast range of movements, allowing her to pull off a variety of funky martial art maneuvers. Importantly, those animations are interruptible, allowing her to run forward,

leap, roll forward and draw her weapon in one fluid movement. At this viewing, it looked damn cool. Also, those moves aren't going to require complex *Street Fighter*-style combos on the gamepad to pull off.

Kinoko will also have a few guns available (though the number and variety has yet to be determined). Mission objectives will require strategy, rather than *Shogun*-esque destruction. On occasions firepower will be vital, and Bungie is still



The classic fight — evil corporations and personal demons.



No detailed hit location option is planned, though hits to the head may do more damage.

working on targeting techniques to ensure that the third-person perspective is a help, rather than hindrance to the action quotient. Limited ammo availability and mission structures that require stealth will likely hedge the balance of action to the melee side.

Enemy AI is an area that Bungie has invested a great deal of time and effort already. A "Pre-Conditioned Neural Net" (we tried, but couldn't come up with a funky acronym) gives each opponent a range of options to act and move in different ways depending upon what Kinoko does, and on what other enemies are doing. It was already looking solid (and, surprisingly realistic) during our early demo.

Graphical treats are being incorporated into the 3D

world, with Bungie stressing their radiosity lighting as a star performer. With stealth playing a part in many missions, creating ethereal environments and shadowy settings among those mammoth corporation offices is crucial. In trying to make sure that the *Oni* world is real, non-aggressive characters will be wandering around. Fortunately, while blowing them away raises moral

issues, it isn't going to cost you in the game. Sidekicks will appear to help Kinoko in certain circumstances, coming in when she needs a helping hand. Those occasions shouldn't be too common, as the range of moves is impressive, letting Kinoko kick some serious ass.

Which is always a good thing in our book.

— ROB SMITH would like to be able to do those *ninja* moves.



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"PERFORMANCE WAS SIMPLY STUNNING"



-Computer Gaming World, July 1998

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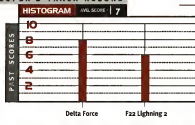
-3DUT Magazine, July 1998



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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Maximum Overkill

Give voxels a chance — really

When PCKL staffers sit around debating the intricacies of the games industry — assessing who are the players, the pretenders, and those that, when mentioned, are greeted with comments like “I hope they fall off the face of the planet tomorrow” — names like Id

Software, Blizzard, Dynamix and Mattel always come up (decide for yourself under which heading). A not so prominent name is Novalogic, the long-standing jet sim developer and publisher who threw their hat daringly into the first-person action game ring recently with *Delta Force*.

It's not that Novalogic isn't a player, merely a pretender, or a company we hope will disappear sometime soon — it's just that they're not vastly prolific. They have basically concentrated on their successful jet and helicopter sims for some years (an area we don't really get into, to say the least). *Delta Force* was a bolt out of the blue.

Novalogic has long since insisted on using voxel technology in all their games, and while the effects in their flight sims were extremely effective, the pixelated look of those little voxels in the up-close and personal setting of a first-person shooter raised some questions. At a distance, the look

is impressive — textures are highly detailed and explosions have a dirty, but highly effective blended look. Face-to-face, however, those jagged edges look out of place in the texture-smoothed, round-edged polygonal, 3D accelerated times we're living in.

Not to be deterred from the voxel path by popular buzz-technologies, Novalogic's next foray in to the action genre is *Maximum Overkill*, a vehicular combat game with their now familiar military slant. Set in the year 2007, the world as we know it has (as seems to happen all too frequently in gaming fiction) gone to complete hell. But rather than just suffer a general breakdown of lawful world



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Novalogic
 PUBLISHER → Novalogic
 RELEASE DATE → July '99
 API SUPPORT → None

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Delta Force is a damn good game with a lot of detail and admirable AI. *MO* should extend these elements.

THE HURDLE

Vehicular combat games are not as popular as first-person. *Delta Force*'s success won't necessarily mean the same for *MO*.

THE HIT

Novalogic's multiplayer games could be the key. If it's intuitive with appealing interface, it could lure newcomers.

In *MO*, the crazy rolling terrain of *Delta Force* has been retained, supplying plenty of hiding places for rail-gun-equipped tanks.



Team organization will be vital to plan and execute base raids.

society, the bad guys have managed to put aside their anarchic differences and banded together under the moniker of the New Reforms Coalition (NRC). Bad? Imagine Saddam Hussein, Colonel Gaddafi, a volatile nuclear-armed Soviet Republic, the Khmer Rouge, Aaron Spelling, and Idi Amin all joining together under the despotic tutelage of Hitler. This NRC wants to dominate the world, but opposing them is (figuratively speaking) Stormin' Norman, Henry Kissinger, and Gandhi, all flying the flag of the Alliance of Independent

Republics (AIR), headed by Winston Churchill. That's the premise.

With the demise of the United Nations, the AIR is a definite underdog as the world descends into war. But in a twist that allows the game its futuristic skew, but

retain the claustrophobic intensity of a WWII-style battle, both sides have developed adroit technologies that make long range missiles and jets ineffective. That means that victory will come to whichever side most effectively utilizes its ground forces — essentially tanks and a form of armored dune buggy — and rapid strike helicopters. As both a commanding general, overseeing the battle strategy, and a hands-on vehicle pilot, you've got plenty to keep you occupied.

The mission structure follows a pattern set in *Delta Force* where you're informed of the various objectives (patrol, convoy escort, search and destroy, and full assault), and instructed where computer-controlled AI compatriots will be helping out. This time around, you'll be selecting from your army a type of vehicle to

pilot into this combat. While the game will suggest which of the three types is most suitable, you get to choose exactly which one of the 10 available vehicles you take, and also how you configure its loadout from a range of weapon options. Some weapons are based on technologies still in development including, for example, a tank-mounted railgun (mmm ... railguns).

Balance is a key issue in Novalogic's design of the vehicles. "The heavier tank-like vehicles have hefty armor and can take more shots, while the helicopters are more nimble and unrestricted by the terrain. The dune buggies are fast, highly maneuverable, and have much larger radar sweeps, which makes this vehicle an indispensable member of a squad," explains *MO* producer Mike Maza.

While it seemed like a good idea at the time, and looked very impressive at first, the scripting of troop movement in *Delta Force* led to some unrealistic actions. For *Maximum Overkill*, each vehicle is being given its own independent AI and will therefore act and react accordingly, includ-



FIVE QUESTIONS

PRODUCER MIKE MAZA WAS BEHIND BY THE FIVE QUESTIONS, BUT THOUGHTFULLY CHOSE TO ANSWER THEM ANYWAY.

Q. 3D acceleration: Is it all over-hyped by people like *PC*, *er*, *Accelerator*?

A. We're all for 3D acceleration — everybody wants their graphics to load quickly. But 3D cards work well for some applications (polygons) while software-only solutions work better for others (voxels).

Q. How many voxels does it take to change a lightbulb?

A. Lightbulbs never burn out in *Voxel Space*.

Q. How many people are working on *MO*? And on the flight sims?

A. It's amazing how many people will work for free pizza. But seriously, everyone in the company works on all of the products in one way or another.

Q. Should Clinton have been allowed to remain in office?

A. If Hillary can forgive him, so can we.

Q. Will the government be approaching you to use *MO* for future army training — should we expect *MO*'s near future assessment of the world state?

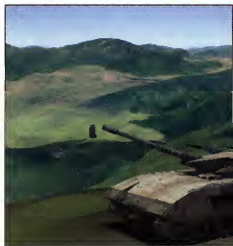
A. With the impending Y2K economic, social and political breakdown, *MO*'s depiction of the future is a likely outcome. So everyone should begin training on *MO* immediately. Not that we're paranoid or anything.



Once upon a time, there was a turret ...



Hi-res cut scenes look pretty darn cool, especially when you're blowing shit up.



Tank: Voxels.



Tank: Renders.

ing using tactical decisions to try and flank opponents, assess the biggest threat, and basically make the types of self-preservation decisions lacking in nearly every game enemy AI on the market.

Multiplayer could really be *MO*'s defining aspect. Already, the NovaWorld servers have proved reliable and relatively lag-free playing experiences for the jet sims, and for 32-player *Delta Force* games.

MAXIM OVERKILL



Ever since *Maxim* launched in the US, ev-ry men's magazine on earth has tried to copy them. More, have-been-very successful. *Maxim* still rules



GO
ORIGINALLY—> Pretty boy yuppies in navy blazers

MAXIM-IZED—> Heidi Klum in a string bikini

CRAP FACTOR—> Craptacular—Text-to-picture ratio still very, very high



ESQUIRE
ORIGINALLY—> Political figures and republican actors

MAXIM-IZED—> Pamela Anderson and a cover line that reads "Breasts"

CRAP FACTOR—> Criminally crap—not one pic of Pam getting naughty or naked inside



DETAILS
ORIGINALLY—> Pretty boy rockstars and lame style advice

MAXIM-IZED—> Scary chick rockstars and lame style advice

CRAP FACTOR—> Sit er-cra—a frazzled—Even Anke can't save this rag

What *MO* is adding to the familiar mix is intriguing: The team base plays a significant role and is more than just a spawning point, or flag location. As Maza explains, "Bases are loaded with fully functional buildings, such as repair depots, communications towers, power facilities, etc. Now, there's a reason to protect your base and plan tactical attacks on specific buildings. By knocking out the enemy's communications tower, a player can seriously hamper the enemy squad's ability to work together effectively." This element has already been seen in *Dynamix Tribes*, but the vehicle aspect and destructible buildings give it a fresh new perspective.



But what about those voxels? *DF* used *VoxelSpace 3*, and *Novalogic* is continually working on this core technology. While it's unlikely that *MO* will ship with anti-aliasing techniques that *Infogrames* has worked into their forthcoming voxel-based *Outcast* game, there will certainly be improvements. For example there will be a more realistic hazing effect when looking over the distant terrain, and that haze adds a strategic element to the gameplay by giving more cover when hiding in the gullies.

Other possible features include support for 24-bit color, which will smooth out the look of the terrain.

Foot soldiers will appear in *MO*, but only as computer-controlled characters, running errands, doing repairs—making



the game world look more realistic. They're known as

"Crunchies" and I can only guess that's due to the sound that they make as they're helplessly crushed under your treads.

Delta Force has certainly given me a faith in *MO* that *Novalogic*'s reputation wouldn't have supported before the former game's release. Continued work with the voxel technology is still needed (just look at *Outcast*), but the solid game ideas are certainly in place to make me predict that *Maximum Overkill* could be one of the sleeper hits of the year.

— ROB SMITH is made entirely of fifth-generation voxels—really



The *Maximum Overkill* voxel engine already looks better than that in *Delta Force*, and continuing updates will improve things before shipping.




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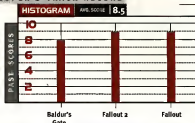


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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Planescape: Torment

Life is hard when you can't remember it

Interplay — well, Interplay's specific in-house RPG developers, Black Isle — knows role-playing. With two *Fallout* games and *Baldur's Gate* topping sales charts, Black Isle is carving from the memory the dogs and disappointments like *Descent* to *Undermountain* and *Stonekeep*. With *Baldur's Gate* still fresh on hard drives everywhere (not to



mention at least one expansion pack in the oven), Black Isle is at it again with *Planescape: Torment* — one of the most intriguing RPG concepts to come around in a while.

Using Bioware's Infinity Engine (*Baldur's Gate's* engine), *Torment* is based on the pen-and-paper AD&D games' bizarre, surreal world setting. What is *Planescape* exactly? Lead Designer, Chris Avellone, describes it as "a hardcore, adult fantasy setting, where

everything has an edge to it. Belief, emotions, faith, and other abstract concepts actually make their presence felt on reality within *Planescape*, and have the power to reshape worlds, kill and resurrect gods (called "powers") and change the laws of physics.

"The 'world' of *Planescape* is actually a misnomer," he continues. "It's actually composed of a series of 'planes' (other dimensions) that rotate around a central

city, called the Sigil, like spokes on a wheel." Scattered throughout the labyrinth of city streets are portals that can lead to anywhere in existence (with the proper key), making it a pivotal location in the game.

Rather than creating your own character in traditional RPG fashion you have one set guy around whom the story revolves. The story begins when you awaken from the dead in a morgue suffering from amnesia. Not original, but you'll soon be discovering who you are, how you died, and what the hell is going on. Help is available from allies, including Mort, a disembodied skull, who floats around making sarcastic quips.

TRUE TORMENT

TORMENT → A source of harassment, annoyance, or pain. The following is a list of things and people which fit this definition perfectly

CHICK FLICKS
TORMENTOR → Girlfriend who makes you see these "touching" dramas.
GREATEST PAIN → Trying not to laugh out loud when the "hero" dies just after professing his undying love.
CURE → Dump girlfriend, spend nights drunk on a sofa with slovenly roommates

MICHAEL BOLTON
TORMENTOR → Whiny voice inflicts aural pains that'll make you want to rip off your fingernails.
GREATEST PAIN → Horrid cover of "When a Man Loves a Woman."
CURE → Stop watching VH-1 and listening to shiny love songs, you loser!

'NICE' GIRLS
TORMENTOR → The little tease that wants to waa "until she gets married."
GREATEST PAIN → Blue balls.
CURE → "Not so nice" girls

ROOMMATE FROM HELL
TORMENTOR → Nothing gets a girl out of the mood more than your overweight roommate lounging around in his ripped underwear.
GREATEST PAIN → When he sits on the sofa drinking YOUR beer, listening to YOUR stereo, and making the moves on YOUR date.
CURE → He won't move out, so your only choice is to kill him. Easiest to do when he's asleep



Not to pigeonhole, but it's like *Sanitarium* meets *Baldur's Gate*.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Black Isle Studios
PUBLISHER → Interplay Productions
RELEASE DATE → June '99
RPI SUPPORT → N/A

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

AD&D action from the folks who know how to do it, riding on the success of *Fallout 2* and *Baldur's Gate*.

THE HURDLE

The world and premise are strange and disturbing, a possible problem, even for the strange and disturbing AD&D crowd.

THE HIT

With a strong focus on design, a proven engine, and cool game elements, it may push *Baldur's Gate* out of the top spot.

FIVE QUESTIONS

GUIDO HENKEL, SENIOR PRODUCER AT BLACK ISLE, RELUCTANTLY LOWERED HIMSELF TO ANSWER THE INTREPID FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: If you could be a fantasy world deity, what would you want to be the god of?

A: That would probably have to be "Reasonability." I wish I could teach people reasonability and strike every time I see someone simply pushing his own "personal freedom" envelope a little too far.

Q: Why Planescape? What was so appealing about this obscure corner of the AD&D world, and how have you exploited it?

A: The nice thing about Planescape is that it gives you the freedom most other universes are missing. It is not only a rather open system that breaks with many traditional conventions, it is also intelligent and intellectual world compared to traditional fantasy settings.

Q: What had to be done to the Infinity Engine to get it up to speed for the rather bizarre Planescape world?

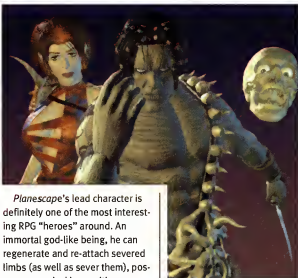
A: We changed some of the graphics capabilities to allow for the things we wanted. We simply try to funnel the data a little better which in turn allows us to have more animated graphics on the screen at any one time. On top of that we created some custom renders for some of our spell special effects. Other than that most changes are rather minor and more gameplay related as opposed to true engine changes.

Q: On a similar note, given all the bizarre creatures in this world, are monsters just monsters like in most RPGs?

A: Obviously there are a large number of creatures that are there mostly for you to beat up, but many of the game's characters have motivations and agendas of their own. They are not standing around in certain areas like stick figures waiting for you to show up.

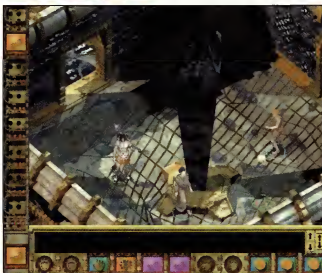
Q: Games like *Fallout 2*, *Jagged Alliance 2*, and to some extent *Baldur's Gate* all have prostitution and sexual aspects. Does Planescape have this new layer of interactivity? And do you feel that this sort of thing in games is the sort of positive trend that will continue in PC gaming from now on?

A: We do have brothels in *Torment* but they serve a different purpose. Prostitution in Planescape is reduced to sense as opposed to sexual interactions. So, to answer the question, no we will not take the game to this "new layer of interactivity." That's what porn software is for.



Planescape's lead character is definitely one of the most interesting RPG "heroes" around. An immortal god-like being, he can regenerate and re-attach severed limbs (as well as sever them), possesses magical immunities, speaks with the dead, and is really popular with the ladies — despite a rather gruesome appearance. Interplay describes him in AD&D terms as having basically been 25th level in all possible classes. The problem is that he can't remember any of this. The key to progression in *Torment* lies in reclaiming the pieces of his own identity, thus enabling him to use more skills and abilities.

Throughout the game (which uses different planes as milestones to determine the story's progress, rather than *Baldur's Gate's* chapters), the player's reputation is clearly defined by his playing style. *Torment* keeps track



The pure variety is astonishing, even if the *Baldur's Gate* battle system can be a bit boring.



How in the hell this freak gets good-looking women is beyond us. Maybe it's the talking head — chicks dig the talking head, right?

of your actions, and adjusts the entire plot accordingly. The designers wanted to make sure that player's actions have effects that shape the world around him, and that non-player characters react to these changes. "You will experience a different game when you play *Torment* as an evil character as opposed to playing as a totally good guy," Henkel added.

As expected, there's a strong focus on plot and dialogue, and the game already has almost as much text as *Baldur's Gate*, despite being about half the size. Black Isle promises plenty of wicked twists to jerk players around and make them think the story is going one way, then suddenly shift gears and spin the saga in another direction.

Combat will remain similar to *Baldur's Gate*, but with some twisted new elements. You can

disembowel enemies, stab them, rip their chest open, and tear their soul out; or just cut off one of their (or your) arms and use it to beat the living hell out of the dirty bastards. You can even cast man-eating insect swarms at your enemies. That said, there will still be plenty of typical hack 'n' slash-style combat, too.

"We wanted to create an eccentric, mind-spinning power fantasy splashed with moments of breathtaking violence," Avel-lone concludes. Add the promise of lots of fantasy babes to interact with, and *Planescape* is shaping up to be a major show-stopper for RPG-lovers.

— JASON D'APRILE prefers to live in a fantasy world where all the babes dig him and he turns his stories in time



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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

HISTOGRAM



WHO ARE THEY?

SFC is being developed by Quicksilver Software, who list board game *Shogun: The Great Game* and strategy games *Conquest of the New World* and *Castles* (for Interplay) among their entertainment credits. Also proficient in educational software, Activision used the company for "programming assistance" on *Hyper Blade* and *Zork: Nemesis*.

Star Trek: Starfleet Command

A taste of armageddon

If you're an old-school "Star Trek" enthusiast, you've likely spent the last six or seven years distrustfully eyeing each new Trek game release like a traumatized gerbil monitoring a procession of Richard Gere impersonators. With the exception of *Starfleet Academy*, it's been pretty grim, and many purists would take an

even harsher view. The tides of time have not been kind to "Star Trek," with the gung-ho "wagon train to the stars" morphing into the kinder, gentler "Next Generation"/"Deep Space Nine"/"Voyager" soap operas with a disturbing trend toward non-violence.

Starfleet Command is a one-to-six-player realtime tactics game that correctly assumes that

gamers want to use capital starships mainly to blow up other capital starships, and to hell with what the ship's counselor is feeling.

Directly influenced by the engrossing (but dauntingly complex) *Starfleet Battles* hex-board wargame, *Starfleet Command* puts you in direct tactical control of ships from six star-faring governments. The governments include The United Federation of Planets, The Klingon Empire, The Romulan Empire, The Lyran Star Empire, and The Hydran Kingdom. The Gorn Confederation (lizards with an agenda) have managed to make the cut, while the rag-tag Orion Pirates (greedy ship-modifying cartels who'd sell their own mothers for a buck) will play a major role in



This is a boring screenshot—aren't ya glad we included it?

the game (though they cannot be controlled), along with six scary new space monsters.

Starfleet Command aims to strike a balance between gotta-keep-thinking tactics and pure action. The combat gameplay is in realtime, with the game "camera" following your ship through any of



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Quicksilver Software
 PUBLISHER → Interplay Productions
 RELEASE DATE → July '99
 API SUPPORT → Glibc, DirectX3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

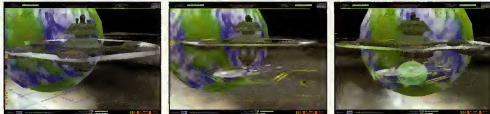
A staggeringly detailed PC version of the "80s hex-board game *Starfleet Battles*—tactical combat in the "Star Trek" universe.

THE HURDLE

Translating a massively deep game of pre-plotted combat into an engaging RTS that Joe Average can comprehend and enjoy.

THE HIT

Takes its gameplay mechanics cues from the best "Star Trek"-based combat game ever created, before the *Voyager* crap.



The sleek new line of Federation capital ship: "Looks like a fish, moves like a fish, steers like a cow."

FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERPLAY'S SENIOR GROUP PRODUCER, ERIK BETHKE REALLY GRASPED THE SPIRIT OF THE INIMITABLE FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q. Generally speaking, would the *SFC* design team do Seven of Nine? Do they have long, impassioned discussions about this at work?

A. Ah yes. Ah no.

Q. How hard was it finding enough concentrated Dweebness to get a team who all "got" *Starfleet Battles* enough to make a PC game of it?

A. They are all around you, just look carefully.

Q. Was there even a random, psychotic thought of making this game full 3D?

A. Yes, and it is squashed once a month.

Q. What's the pain-in-the-ass factor of working with Paramount? Be honest, it won't go anywhere, much.

A. Juliet Dutton [Paramount Licensing Manager] is, sincerely, my favorite person to work with outside of Interplay.

Q. What's the substance of choice for the *SFC* team?

A. Dr. Pepper by a very long shot.



30 total missions, across a scrolling space-fabric grid with dramatic, flaring nebulae as a colorful backdrop. In our test with a beta version of the game, these lumbering, high-velocity starship clashes resulted in tense, circling confrontations, not unlike WWI-era dogfights. It isn't enough to merely have a phaser bank or a photon torpedo salvo ready, they've got to be in the proper cone of fire, based on your ship's current heading and the weapon mounts you've selected.

In keeping with the board game-inspired combat scheme, each ship's deflector shields are arranged in a surrounding hexagon, with six distinct defense barriers to micro-manage. If you can hammer down the enemy's rear shield and stay on his six, the next shot fired rips into the hull, causing massive internal damage and, by degrees, degrading the



I've seen lots of *Star Trek* — maybe too much — and I've never seen an episode or movie that looked anything like this.

energy, speed and effectiveness of said ship. There's no game of chicken quite as ugly as a duel between two starships, both missing their front shields like toothless bar-brawlers. As they close the distance head-on, each wants to delay fire until they're at point-blank range. Then, at the last second, they shear off, while the side and rear-mounted weapons open up in a trans-light drive-by.

Keeping true to the nasty, eye-gouging spirit of *Starfleet Battles*, there seems to be no end to the meanspirited, rat-bastard tactics

one can resort to when the going gets tough. How about luring the enemy into a chase and then dumping a pack of mines right in his face? How about tractor-beaming a player's smaller vessel and shoving him into a planet, or, slam-dunking him into a black hole? *Starfleet Command's* vast selection of subsystems allows for an impressive variety of film-inspired and original operations.

Some will balk, not unreasonably, that the entire game takes place on a 2-D plane (as did *Starfleet Battles*), but the action seems set to be tense, violent and deep. And, *SFC* plans to have real-time tutorials (in the vein of *Myth*) for novices, to make sense of what is a quite complex interface.

Starfleet Command, though still in its early stages, is the most promising, and least wussy, *Trek* games attempted to (star)date.

— CHRIS HUDAK repeatedly claims to have seen one killer "Voyager" episode — nobody believes him

EL CAPITAN



KIRK VS. PICARD

WOMEN → Kirk
WHY → He nailed every woman he met (alien or otherwise)

FIST FIGHT → Kirk
WHY → He'd chop, haymaker, and body blows are just too much

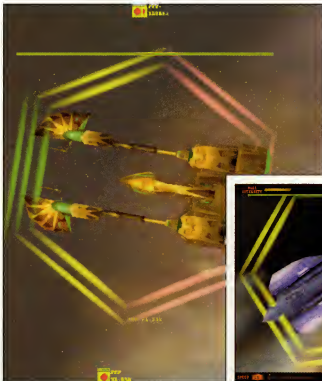
STARSHIP FIGHT → Kirk
WHY → The Picard maneuver is impressive, but Kirk is willing to gamble the lives of his entire crew

WUSSINESS → Picard
WHY → Talk first, shoot later? Hub?

SINGING → Picard
WHY → Have you ever heard Shatner's album?

DIPLOMACY → Picard
WHY → See Wussiness

OVERALL WINNER → Kirk. Despite a 3-3 tie, Kirk wins because he dominates in the important categories. We just wish he'd stop trying to sing (or talk as it were)



Unlike the hex-board game, *SFC* is really pretty uncomplicated. Kick your enemies' ass at all cost.

*"Political power grows out
of the barrel of a gun."*

-Mao Tse-tung

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as much as a good fight."*

-Franklin Delano Roosevelt



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intense

as

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SIX

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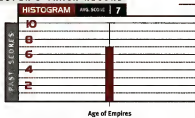
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Age of Empires II: The Age of Kings

It's a quantum leap back to the future

I detest people who call you, our readers, bloodthirsty cretins who only play games to blow things up. I take great offense to that because, like me, you are far more advanced bloodthirsty cretins than critics could ever give you credit for. Gamers like us aspire to a greater destruction—the kind that can wipe out a bountiful nation or, if necessary, the entire civilized world.

Age of Empire II: Age of Kings is exactly the kind of game that separates the bloodthirsty cretins with epic aspirations from your run-of-the-mill bloodthirsty cretins. It meshes the society-building qualities of games such as *Civilization* and *Sim City* with the means and ability to tear down someone else's precious little utopia. Sure, the first *Age of Empires* (a runaway success) offered the same promise, but it

suffered from a few nagging problems such as Tori Spelling-level artificial intelligence, low unit limits, and characters who couldn't pathfind their way out of a cardboard box. Fortunately, this sequel addresses those problems and adds much more to the mix, making *Age of Kings* a mammoth step forward for the franchise.

The first upgrade that fans of the original will notice is a change in graphics. The terrain sets are far more detailed than those in *AOE*, with larger maps and far more detailed buildings. While units from different cultures were exactly the same in the first game, this time around each culture has its own unique look and feel. *AOE2* will boast a total of 13 different civilizations that each visually represent their homeland and also

respond to commands in their native tongue.

But the graphics and sound are not the only difference between races. Each group now has its own special units. For instance, the Japanese civilization will have the special abilities of Samurai on its side, while the Turks fight with janissary archers (who use both bows and melee weapons), and the British will employ longbow soldiers to supplement the basic warfare units.

Granted, this variation might sound simple, but it greatly affects how the game is balanced and what strategies work best. Add that to the variety of more than 50 different types of units and you have a game that should outlast the typical color-by-numbers real-time strategy.



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Ensemble Studios
 PUBLISHER → Microsoft
 RELEASE DATE → Fall '99
 3D SUPPORT → None

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Age of Empires was a hit, and this follow-up fixes most of the problems in the original. Frankly, hype isn't really necessary.

THE HURDLE

Ensemble must make all the unit types balance and make the complex strategy palatable for a widespread audience.

THE HIT

It's everything you liked about the first game but much more refined. Plus it lets you play as Genghis Khan.

Ooh, pretty, pretty civilizations. Soon these will be ground to dust by a PCXL reader with a temper and an army of Mongol warriors to back him up.



ON THE BATTLEFIELD



THE HOMEFRONT



FIVE QUESTIONS

WE CORNERED ENSEMBLE STUDIOS PRODUCER HARTER RYAN AND ASKED HIM THE FIVE TOUGHEST QUESTIONS OF HIS LIFE. HE BROKE DOWN IN TEARS, BUT NOT BEFORE GIVING US A FEW ANSWERS.

Q. You guys seem very focused on making the AI as realistic as possible. What is one key difference in traditional realtime strategy AI, as opposed to human opponents?

A. Our AI takes game conditions of which it is aware into consideration when making decisions during the play of the game. An example, if the AI player is being attacked by cavalry, it will respond to the attack by building pikemen (which are good against cavalry).

Q. How difficult has it been to balance the different people groups now that they each have their own unique units?

A. Balancing the units and technologies amongst the different civilizations is one of our greatest challenges. We meet this challenge by working hard at analyzing the games we play and listening to the feedback of hundreds of playtesters.

Q. It's obvious you guys have a fondness for history. Who would you say is your favorite historical military leader?

A. The great Mongol leader Genghis Khan. He showed that tactics, ferocity, and cunning could overthrow his opponents.

Q. Okay, your leader walks into a bar and picks a fight with Laverne and Shirley's tough guy Carmine Ragooa ("The Big Ragoo").

A. Ragoo is carried out in a boiling pot of water that Genghis Khan later serves to his family.

Q. What if they decide to "dance it out?" Who comes out on top?

A. While Ragoo is undoubtedly a better dancer, all Genghis Khan has to say is "I am the fall of God. If you had not committed great sins, God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you." Still want to dance, Carmine? :-)



Variety is the biggest difference between AOE and Age of Kings.

Combat has also been improved as players will now have the ability to control their unit's stance and aggression levels. You can tell your troops to guard, patrol, or follow other units, which frees you up to concentrate on the important elements of civilization destruction. Once you're focused on the offensive side of things, you'll find that you can adjust both the facing and formation of your units. The former adds to the effectiveness of your fighters, and if used properly, the latter will make your army a ruthless killing machine.

If you want to see some real destruction, then you better be able to use all of these new techniques because the AI has been considerably juiced over last year's version. Computer opponents now adapt to player strategies and playing styles with appropriate defenses and counter-maneuvers. In the single player arena you will face the new AI in a campaign setup that lets you follow a gameplay scenario based on the lives of real figures such as

William Wallace, Joan of Arc, Richard the Lion-Hearted, and Genghis Khan.

For those of you not completely satisfied with burning your enemies to the ground, Ensemble Studios was kind enough to include a living economy that changes as the game progresses so you can bring your foes to financial ruin as well. If you play it right, you can win the single player games with a strong economic strategy rather than military might. (But what's the fun in that?)

From an early hands-on view of the game, *Age of Kings* looks cooler, plays better, and even feels deeper than the original. Considering that more than one million people bought the first title, this game is all but guaranteed to offer lots of online competition and happy civilizations that need to be ground to dust. So keep that bloodthirsty nature boiling, because there'll be plenty of destruction to go around.

—DAN EGGER has been called both a blaaaythirsty cretin, and a regular cretin many times

THE FORGOTTEN AGES

Ensemble has expressed its plans to create a four-part *Age of Empires* franchise that spans the entire history of man. So far they have done an excellent job picking crucial moments in history, but we'd like to suggest a few more for the next edition.

THE INDUSTRIAL AGE

HIGH POINT: The invention of the assembly line

LOW POINT: The invention of smog

DEFINING MOMENT: North fights the Civil War to end slavery, while its factories pay workers less money than it costs to pay for room and board

THE AGE OF INVENTION

HIGH POINT: Thomas Edison invents the light bulb

LOW POINT: Albert Einstein invents the Atomic Bomb

DEFINING MOMENT: Alexander Graham Bell makes first call, forgets to use 1-800-COLLECT

THE POLYESTER AGE

HIGH POINT: John Travolta grooves in *Saturday Night Fever*

LOW POINT: Anything involving either the Captain and/or Tenille Dierks. **DEFINING MOMENT:** Shelby Winters found stuffed into a tight red polyester jumpsuit, paramedics called to the rescue

THE ESTHER ROLLE AGE

HIGH POINT: "Good Times" in the early years

LOW POINT: "Good Times" in the late years

DEFINING MOMENT: The episode where some people claim you could actually see her neck



You are able to win a game by creating an economic empire, but be prepared to shed some blood along the way.

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

PAST SCORES	HISTOGRAM	AVG. SCORE
	10	10
9	8	
8	6	
7	4	
6	2	
5	1	
4	1	
3	0	
2	0	
1	0	

WHO ARE THEY?

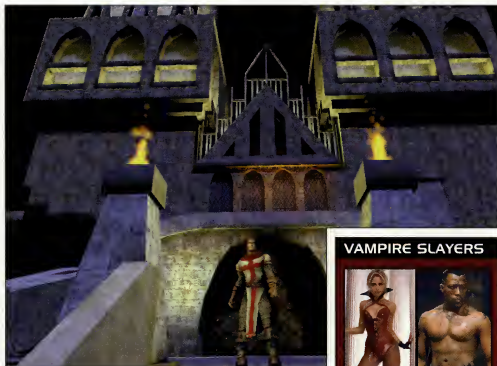
After completing *Jedi Knight for LucasArts*, a bunch of the team left to do their own thing, including programmer/co-designer Ray Gresko (who now heads up Nihilistic), and the creators of the incredible *J&K* levels. This talented team also includes Steve Tietze (*Quake* and *Quake II* level packs), and Robert Huebner (*Descent*, *StarCraft*).

Vampire

When vampires suck, they swallow

Immortality, a diet of blood sucked from the veins of nubile virgins, the ability to turn invisible, and a perfectly understandable revulsion to garlic — the lifestyle of the vampire of traditional myth has a certain enviable quality. But there's a darker side to the simple, bloodsucking cliché. Most importantly, there's usually a dramatic, tragic tale attached to each vampire's "embrace" — the point at which victims join the undead. White Wolf's Storyteller roleplaying system places these character development elements at the forefront of the game, spiced up with the requisite action quotient.

In *Redemption*, Nihilistic is aiming to ensure the same blend of an angsty-driven lead character and the visceral experience of dark, brooding and dramatic environments. Ray Gresko, Nihilistic's CEO and project lead on *Redemption*,



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Nihilistic
 PUBLISHER → Activision
 RELEASE DATE → Q4 '99
 API SUPPORT → DirectX3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Nihilistic looks to have an impressively talented development team, a strong license and their own creative freedom.

THE HURDLE

Not much of one, really, except that the dark, mature content might not be appreciated by mainstream audiences.

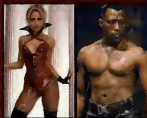
THE HIT

White Wolf's pen-and-paper games are selling incredibly well, with *Vampire* leading the way.



Vampire slayer turned vampire — things could get ugly.

VAMPIRE SLAYERS



Buffy VS. Blade

Who is the baddest slayer of all?

CHEST

BUFFY → Young and perky
BLADE → Buffed and oiled
VERDICT → Buffy by a pair — we'll take young and perky every time

SIDEKICK

BUFFY → Willow, the nerdy wanna-be witch with self-image problems
BLADE → An extremely old and haggard Kris Kristofferson
VERDICT → Buffy by a pair, again — nerdy female still better than washed up country and western singer

WEAPONS

BUFFY → Wooden stakes, crossbows, and the occasional axe
BLADE → Tricked out futuristic vampire slaying machines
VERDICT → Buffy — he doesn't just kill vampires, he mutilates them

OVERALL VERDICT → Blade would kick her ass (mmm... her ass), but Buffy still wins a 1, for obvious reasons



Slaying monsters is only half the battle. The rest is drinking blood.

FIVE QUESTIONS

OF COURSE, THE NIHILISTIC TEAM HAD TO ADDRESS THE INIMITABLE PCXL FIVE QUESTIONS:

Q: Vampires. Exist or not?

A: Not only do they exist, but they exist in our offices. One of the main reasons for choosing this office was the lack of natural sunlight.

Q: How scary was it to leave the cozy stability of LucasArts?

A: I don't think any game developer has the freedom to be "cozy." At LucasArts, we pushed ourselves to the limit to put out great product, and it's really no different here.

Q: How many publishers did you have knocking on your door when you all left to form Nihilistic?

A: We didn't really do the whole "big public exodus" thing like some startups. In fact, we didn't announce anything publicly until after we had signed a deal. So it was more like we were the ones knocking on doors. Fortunately, many of those doors were opened for us. Although it might have been fun to send out an e-mail stating "The Monkey has landed," we took the more low-key route.

Q: Is it true what they say about George Lucas?

ROB: George who?
RAY: Must ... not ... think ... about ... Star ... Wars ... (tm) ...

Q: What do you make of the recent "outing" of Tinky Winky?

RAY: As a father of two, one of whom is a Teletubby-crazed toddler, I really couldn't care less. When comparing these horrifying things to real people I usually get stuck on the fluorescent cloth jumpsuits, weird headshapes, glazed eyes and TV-tube-bellies before getting close to trying discern sexual orientation.

explains, saying, "What other game allows you to cloak yourself in shadows, grow feral claws and appear instantly to behead an opponent, fire a shotgun blast with pinpoint accuracy and speed, pausing only to take down the last creep by draining him of his blood? You leave the scene with a comment on the uncultured taste of his vitae and you're gone, leaping from the rooftop to an adjoining skyscraper's parapet — that's action."

Christof Romauld is the lead character and a vampire slayer. Beginning in Gothic Prague, 800 years in the past, he travels to Vienna before taking an unplanned 800-year sabbatical, only to reawaken in modern day London, with New York as the final port of call. Nihilistic's technical expert Rob Huebner told us, "The most important goal is to create a unique atmosphere for the game to set it apart from all the other engines and games out there. This means focusing on the lighting, shadows, fog, and other aspects of the World of Darkness." Nihilistic decided to create their own engine, designed to be played in third-person ("First person doesn't work so well when you're biting people — all you see is neck," offered Gresko). But Huebner explained that they did license Id Software's Q4 Radiant tool for creating the 3D levels.

Having inked a deal with Activision (who'd just signed on for the *Vampire* license), Gresko began working on an RPG game design. "I devoured every one of the 50-plus rulebooks and supplements written for the license in preparation for the design," commented Gresko, who has evidently lived to tell the tale.

The background story will bring out the most compelling elements of the *Vampire* game world, the clan issues and all the factors that make playing a vampire so intriguing. To get across some of these features, you'll control a party of pre-determined characters, though in the fascinating multiplayer side you'll be able to configure your own character's abilities, attributes and clan. Although tight-lipped about the details behind the multiplayer plans, Nihilistic aims to make the Storyteller element extremely important, and to have vampires working together in an "expandable" game world.

User customization was a freedom not enjoyed with the teams' previous LucasArts games, but something they are determined to incorporate in to *Redemption*. The engine has been created to be "data-driven," meaning that the art, dialog, sound, and even scripting can be replaced easily, and



Nihilistic plans to support user mods after shipping.

Vampire: The Masquerade's dark atmosphere will come across in both the level design and the story development. As Gresko concludes, "It has deep roots into the legendary power struggles of these frightening beings, and draws a lot from conspiracy theories and religious myth. The 'Teletubbies' it ain't ..."

—ROB SMITH is the official PCXL Pen and Paper Game Expert, and we taunt him frequently



Kill the unsightly beasts (bottom), then you cook 'em (top).

Honesty!

Honesty's not just our policy — it's a way of life at PCXL. When we review games we guarantee to tell you the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We've seen games like *Tomb Raider III* get inflated scores in other mags, only to hear the reviewer say how crap it actually was to his peers. Why the hell didn't they give it a realistic score? We're hard on games, and you appreciate that. We want to make sure that you're getting the best buying information available. That's why this month sees the introduction of the Test of Time section (p. 96) where we reassess some high profile games — did we get it right, did we screw up? We'll tell it to you straight, no bullshit.



Flesh Feast didn't deserve a 6.

KILLER GAME

Any game that receives a 9 or 10 from our rigorous scoring system warrants this nifty logo. If you see the **PC ACCELERATOR** Killer Game stamp, you know it's a game worth buying. Only the true classics deserve this elite status, so don't expect to see this symbol often.



SUICIDE

If we're going to create a stamp for the truly great, then it's only fair to label the unforgivable shit as well. It takes an abominable score of 1 or 2 to qualify for the noose around the neck. Stay away from these games at all costs.



CRITICAL ADD-ONS >>

Whenever a joystick, soundcard, or other computer accoutrement improves a game, we'll stick a corresponding logo on the review. We include only those devices that make the game better; just being compatible isn't good enough. If you don't see the logo, then that particular add-on doesn't do much for the game.



TILT



3D SOUND



GAMEPAD



MULTIPLAYER



STEERING WHEEL



FORCE FEEDBACK



JOYSTICK

ACCELE-RATED >>

This additional rating provides specific information on how a game performs on a variety of competing 3D chipsets. We test games on up to four major 3D cards and report back with the true test for any 3D accelerator: how it affects the game. We base these ratings on graphic enhancements, framerates, and performance to give you a good idea of how a game will perform on your 3D card.

(Note: Performance may vary depending on the card and the setup of your system.)

RATINGS >>

Our rating scale is a simple 1 to 10 — no decimal points, no obscure percentages, just a straight score that gets right to the point. Before we score games, they undergo countless hours of testing on different systems, with different 3D cards — our reviewers even play the games under the influence of various narcotics. In the end we stamp a single score on the game, which is essentially a numeric value of the game's worth. We love games and always try to look on the bright side, but when a pile of steaming crap comes in, we won't hold back and allow our readers to waste their money on said crap. You can count on our reviews for honesty, insight, and maybe even a few laughs.

ACCELE-RATED

CHIPSET



1
No significant difference from software. This game and card do not justify the expenditure

2
The card provides solid enhancements that make the game more immersive and enjoyable

3
This is what 3D cards are all about. Every effect is utilized, and the smooth framerate makes a huge gameplay difference

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

Flawless. Perfect. Better than that sex dream with Jennifer Love Hewitt and Katie Holmes

10

A true classic. An excellent game that is well worth the money

9

A great game, but may feature a few minor flaws that are easily overlooked

8

A good, solid game that lacks the inspiration or vision of a truly great game

7

A game that rises above the average (barely) due to a hook in style or gameplay

6

The definition of mediocrity, this game doesn't commit any major crime other than being ordinary

5

A game that doesn't exactly suck, but probably won't hold your interest for long

4

OK, maybe there's an element of redeeming value in this game, but it still sucks

3

Very little of interest, this game is deeply flawed and should be avoided

2

Utter crap — Complete shit — A barrel of bullocks — A game that should never have been released

1

DEVELOPER →	Iguana
PUBLISHER →	Acclaim
REQUIRED →	P166 (with Voodoo2 card, PII-266 without), 32MB RAM, 70MB hard drive, 4x CD-ROM
IDEAL →	PII 266, 64MB RAM, Voodoo 2

South Park

Oh my god, they killed South Park!

MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

You can run this game in software mode, but only if you love big honkin' pixels and a low frame rate. A Voodoo 2 is the best choice because of native Glide support. Direct3D support is built-in but the visual quality is worse and one Voodoo 2-powered PC that the game was tested on refused to run the game in D3D mode at all.

RIVA TNT



VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



MATROX G200



API SUPPORT: Glide, D3D

Welcome to South Park—home of foul-mouthed children, over-sexed food service professionals, and a hellu lot of turkeys. As suggested by creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker, the game (based on the Comedy Central show that, in turn, is based on a cartoon short about a showdown between Santa Claus and Jesus) is a 3D first-person shooter using the *Turok* engine. The plot (and surprisingly, there is one) is that after the “Bad

Luck Comet” appears, the alien Visitors (the ones who put a satellite transponder up Cartman’s ass in the first episode) invade South Park, causing evil turkeys, clones, and robots to run amok. Playing as Kyle, Stan, Cartman, or Kenny, it’s your job to set things right again.

Okay, a confession must be made: I love “South Park” (the TV show). Most of you probably do, too, but since PCXL made “South Park” its Fantasy Frag in the December ‘98 issue, admitting such a thing to my fellow editors is tantamount to owning a copy of the *Red-*

neck Rampage Gold Set (which I don’t). I even liked the infamous “Terrance and Phillip” anti-cliffhanger episode (a practical joke so ingenious no other show would have the balls to pull it off). So, why is this important? First, to avoid the inevitable hate mail saying this magazine is biased against South Park. And second, to let fellow fans know that I understand their passion for the show.

Still, the most important factor is whether the game itself is any good. *South Park* isn’t. My colleagues who played the game panned it immediately, with comments ranging from “horrible” to “it hurts my eyes” to some very colorful expletives. But rather than trying to compete with *Quake II* or *Tribes* or even *Turok*, it’s supposed to satisfy fans by replicating the “South Park” experience. As a 3D shooter. And be fun at the same time.

South Park, the game, does an enviable job of recreating “South



Alien rays turn Jesus into a dancing fool.



Exploding spaceships that scare the Mr. Hankey out of you, balling Satan with bovine-powered weapons, farting action figures, and a trio of really mean kids ... it’s just another day in South Park.

CASTING CALL



Jason Alexander



Leonardo DiCaprio



Peter Onorati



Jesse Camp

Okay, everyone knows that *South Park: The Movie* is coming to theaters soon. What you might not have known is that it was not actually going to be done in live action and not animated (umm really... trust us). So, here are the actors who were allegedly lined up for the roles.

CARTMAN

PLAYED BY: Jason Alexander

REASON: Not fat, but big boned. Rolf Gold Pretzel commercial experience comes in useful when singing the praises of Cheesy Pools.

FELL THROUGH

BECAUSE: The Soup Nazi episode of *Seinfeld* scared him from successfully doing the G-man dance song.

STAN

PLAYED BY: Leonardo DiCaprio

REASON: Stan vomits everytime he is near Wimpy Test-Burgers. Fans accuse starring Leonardo makes audience want to vomit.

FELL THROUGH

BECAUSE: Sock cap may mess up hair. Wouldn't be able to get rest of *South Park* cast into Play-by mansion for parties.

KYLE

PLAYED BY: Keanu Reeves

REASON: Kyle likes to play with Mr. Hanley, the Christmas Poo. Keanu Reeves' movies are pieces of crap released around Christmas.

FELL THROUGH

BECAUSE: Acting requirements too strenuous. Thought Jewish character would require learning a new accent.

KENNY

PLAYED BY: Jesse Camp

REASON: Kenny is unintelligible, so is Jesse. Plus, we would really, really like to see Jesse Camp killed off in a sadistically painful way.

FELL THROUGH

BECAUSE: The urge to murder Jesse in the first five minutes of the film would be too strong.



It's Thanksgiving and the turkeys are pissed (only because even they've become annoyed at the incessant gobbling).

Park," the TV show. All the familiar characters are present, at least in multiplayer mode, and graphically the game is successful in recreating the show's colorful, yet sparse, amateurish look while managing to give it a 3D depth. The *Turok* engine captures the appearance of the show perfectly and avoids the trap of just being a simple mod. Many of the *Turok* weapons are here, but cleverly altered so that the Bow and Arrow becomes a non-lethal Plunger Gun, and the grenade launcher becomes flatulent Terrance and Phillip gas bombs. The regular cast (including the helluva cool Isaac Hayes) does the voice work, and even the TV show's intro sequence and theme song is reproduced.

That said, as a 3D shooter, *South Park* sucks. The problem begins early in the first episode when you face wave after wave of gobbling turkeys. The sheer tediousness of their attacks, cou-

pled with strident, tumor-inducing vocalized gobbles will reduce any mere mortal into a quaking lunatic. What might've been funny for five minutes on TV becomes torture after half an hour. Later episodes simply replace the turkeys and "turkey tanks" with clones, cows, Visitors, robots, and evil dolls (but minus the lethal gobbling). Level design is rigidly linear with the occasional secret cave full of goodies and the routine episode-ending boss. As with *Turok*, weapons are a bright spot—they fit the license, but look and sound cool, too.

So, it's fun ... for about 15 minutes in single-player mode, or just long enough to hear most of the voice samples. The multiplayer mode, complete with 26 maps and 24 characters from which to choose, may provide an hour or two of fun, but certainly not \$49.95 worth. *GameSpy Light* is incorporated, which makes finding a game against other "South



Park" fanatics (who wouldn't know a good game if it jumped up and bit them in the ass) quite simple. Unfortunately, the multiplayer game also features some of the worst clipping in a game since the original *Tomb Raider*, although the single-player version is mostly free of it. In a desperate attempt to lengthen gameplay (and the biggest reminder of its N64 past), the game can only be saved at the end of a level. C'mon, Iguana, you changed that for *Turok*, why not *South Park*?

So, let this be a warning to fellow fans—a killer license can't save a mediocre game even if *South Park* tries its damndest to prove that adage wrong. Although any game that lets you play as Jesus in death-match can't be all bad.

—CHUCK OSBORN believes his official title should be changed to "Editor in Charge Of Licensed Cartoon Properties"

GRAPHICS

Great if you happen to like the show, poor if you don't.

SOUND

With the exception of annoying turkey gobbles, the sound effects and voices are a high-point.

DEPTH

Beat waves of enemies, watch a cutscene ... rinse and repeat.

DESIGN

Feels rushed due to clipping and occasional frame skips.

RATING 4

+ Pluses

- It's "South Park"
- With all the characters
- And in 3D

- Minuses

- Another rushed port
- Ill-use of a license
- Turkey-induced therapy bills



"Watch out! Jesus is coming right for us!"



DEVELOPER → Dynamix
 PUBLISHER → Sierra
 REQUIRED → P166, 32 MB RAM with 3D Graphics Accelerator (P200 without), 320MB hard disk, ax CD-ROM
 IDEAL → P1 300, 64MB RAM, Voodoo1 SLI or TNT-based AGP 3D card, 56K modem


Starsiege

Don't call me Mech!


ACCELE-RATED

Technically, *Starsiege* performed beautifully in full-screen 1024 by 768 resolution on a P11 400 with a dual Voodoo 2 SLI. Okay, it should be crying out loud, but I know of many flight sims that can't do the same. There was a slightly crisper definition to some of the structures when run on the TNT, but the explosions looked great on Voodoo 2.


RIVA TNT




VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



MATRIX 6200



API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide

As a huge sci-fi, mechanized warfare fan, no one was more eager than I to play the third installment of Dynamix' *Earthsiege* series. Long overdue, my expectations of *Starsiege* were high, perhaps too high. While it delivers a solid, all around huge robot combat experience, it still failed to inflame any monster passion.

But let's start with the good stuff, of which there is plenty. Incorporating two single-player campaigns (one human and one alien Cybrid — nasty little buggers that resemble overgrown garden-variety insects), training, and multiplayer, you get a total of 45 mis-

sions to play, as well as 24 death-match and capture-the-flag multiplayer maps. Each campaign has its own set of original missions and objectives, meaning you simply don't play the same missions on opposite sides. The music and effects are tailored to each side as well, with the Cybrid voices being wonderfully creepy in a cliché/alien movie/bad-guy sort of way (think Borg Collective).

The epic story is detailed and well-supported throughout the course of the campaigns via narrated cinematics and in-cockpit radio chatter with various "heroes." In a nutshell, the human factions are embroiled in a heated civil war on Mars, which is rudely inter-

rupted by the return of the Cybrids (which were vanquished in *Earthsiege 2*). As a human, your goal is to hold off the Cybrid pests long enough to take out their leader, Prometheus. As a Cybrid, your goal is to squash all human resistance.

Even without consulting the manual, the training missions taught me all I needed to know about the Herc's targeting, radar, and navigation systems. (That's "Herc," not "Mech," which are only in the official FASA game.) The in-game interface is simplicity incarnate: it provides a minimum of key information, clearly displayed where you want it (from a fully customizable HUD). As an added bonus to the game's beefy manual, you also get a beefy color compendium that details the *Starsiege* story, which provides vital technical specs on the vehicles in the game. Read it.



The good news: *Starsiege* is the best mech-combat game ever released! The bad news: *Mechwarrior 3* is coming out soon and is looking like it will kick it's ass. That said, *Starsiege* multiplayer worked extremely well over the Internet — a major plus.



The Cybrids look like overgrown aphids with guns, and they don't get any prettier up close ... but they're easier to shoot that way.

Early experiences with net play were a pleasant surprise. With a ping time of just under 300 milliseconds, I competed in several three- and four-player games with little or no lag whatsoever. *Starsiege* is clearly aimed at the online world, as Dynamix has put considerable time and resources into finding ways to speed up play over the net, and it appears to be paying off.

There are more than 30 different vehicles to pilot, which include Herts, tanks, and Airskimmers with a wide variety of weapons and technical accoutrements. And, you can customize your vehicle's paint job with the supplied skins or create and use your own. I did find the death-match play a bit disappointing, as the variety of vehicles you can

bring on the field leads to many uneven match-ups. This should improve as the game matures and teams of players choose vehicles that complement each other in battle.

On the down side, I found the scripted campaign missions dull. You often have to traverse large tracks of land without any action (something we at PCXL are accustomed to in local bars, not in action games). And the end-game mission on the human side was a total disappointment. Up until this

last encounter you can order up to



Your stoopid wingmen are always bumping into you — real annoying.

three wingmen to help you out. Then suddenly, and without any reason supported in the narrative, you can no longer order your wingmen and must take on Cybrid Prometheus all by yourself. Lame! In addition, the single-player campaigns are relatively short: It took me just 10 hours to play the 16 human campaign missions.

Finally, I found the combat itself rather flat, similar to multiplayer *Unreal* in the first-person world. Though it is beautiful, the combat sounds, weapons, and special effects lack punch. It felt like an overhauled *Mechwarrior*, rather than a kick-ass upgrade to the *Earthsiege* series. Still, *Starsiege* is the best game in its genre, and will continue to be until *Heavy Gear II* and *Mechwarrior III* hit shelves.

—In a fight between a *Herc*, a *Mech* and a *Gear*, STEVE KLETT reckons the *Mech* will win

PORN STAR SIEGE

Attacking Internet search engines near you, these three ladies tend to show up no matter what you are searching for



ANNA MALLE
YAHOO MATCHES → 489
BIGGER THAN → World Peace (63)
NUMBER OF "MOVIES" MADE → 43
BEST MOVIE TITLE → *Butt Sisters Do Denver*
KNOWN FOR → Being the dirtiest porn star in the industry. This is a woman who really enjoys her work

JENNA JAMESON
YAHOO MATCHES → 2,682
BIGGER THAN → Jesus

CHASEY LAIN
YAHOO MATCHES → 3,215
BIGGER THAN → Bill Clinton (1,110)

NUMBER OF "MOVIES" MADE → 50
BEST MOVIE TITLE → *Int'l. review With The Winner*
KNOWN FOR → Hard body, strong c-yes, and hot magazine work in *N.Y. Way 2 Hookers 4*

GRAPHICS

Squashin' Cybrid bugs never looked so good.

SOUND

Excellent techno soundtrack, average combat effects.

DEPTH

Not a major step forward for the genre and soon to be surpassed.

DESIGN

Geared for the online world, *Starsiege* has the potential to be the *Quake* of mechanized combat on the Internet.

RATING



+ Pluses

- Variety of vehicles and weapons
- Indoor and outdoor environments
- Cool music

- Minuses

- Weapons lack punch
- Scripted missions are dull
- No supported mission editor (yet)

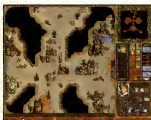
DEVELOPER →	New World Computing
PUBLISHER →	3DO
REQUIRED →	P133, 32MB RAM, 200MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL →	P230, 64MB RAM, 28.8 modem for multiplayer

Heroes Of Might & Magic III

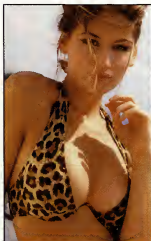
Revealed: Another good turn-based strategy – shocker ...

ACCELE-RATED

There's no need at all for that funky 3D acceleration nonsense. And the P133, 32MB RAM, 16MB TNT video card system that the game was tested on was overkill. The ideal system requirements are accurate, which is handy for the lower end users. You know who you are ...



Now, you can finally take the exploration underground.



Now that's a hero's reward!



A castle town, fully developed – ain't it purty?

Like death, taxes, and hangovers, the unavoidable has happened: 3DO has released yet another version of its popular turn-based strategy game, set in the fantastical world of *Might & Magic*. While the aforementioned facts of life are all bad, *Heroes Of Might & Magic III: The Restoration of Erathia*, is a very, very good thing.

As leader of a contingent of heroes – the number of which varies according to the scenario you play – you're on a quest of strategic conquest, to rid Erathia of evil. Under your tutelage, your heroes build vast fortresses, conduct sieges, and war against rival hero factions. Each scenario consists of a series of turns, with each turn representing a day. Every week the towns under your control gain new soldiers, whom you can purchase with your spoils of war, and then lead into battle to defeat the enemy/find the artifact/conquer a town.

Heroes III boasts a deep magic system, character development (heroes gain experience and abilities as you use them), a vast bestiary of cool enemies to fight, a huge game world, and three separate campaigns (each of which could take you 15+ hours to complete). And then there are some individual scenarios of varying sizes to take on. The challenging



The soldier recruitment screen. What, no chicks?

computer AI, as well the extreme number of items, creatures, and spells, add up to a huge replay value. *Heroes Of Might and Magic III* is one of those games you could probably play for six months and not see everything. To give you a taste, there are 16 hero types, 28 secondary skills a hero can learn, 128 different artifacts, 118 creature types, 64 spells (split into four schools of magic), and 8 types of towns (four evil, four good).

New World has brought a number of new gameplay features to the table for *Heroes III*, too. For starters there are now underground maps and portals to explore and exploit, and war machines letting you bring ammo carts, ballistas, and medical tents to the battlefield. In addition, you can pay a visit to a Seer's Hut and find out about artifacts – success in the quest and you'll be handsomely rewarded.

Multiplayer options include two players at one PC or via modem, and up to eight players via LAN or Internet. There's also a pretty cool map editor you can use to construct your own scenarios.

What's not to like? Well, the game's complexity can be a bit overwhelming at first, so take the time to go through the tutorial. Your soldiers still do not carry over to the next scenario, and it can get frustrating continually having to build your army up again. The game has an annoying tendency to get extremely choppy after an hour or so of play, which can be fixed by quitting and restarting. The inability to surrender or flee when under siege is annoying, too,



How 'bout a nice bolt of lightning in the face?

especially when it's patently obvious that you're on the wrong end of a severe kicking. And, targeting individual foes on the field of battle can be tricky when units are clumped together.

Still, none of these aggravations detracts from *Heroes III*'s core absorbing and addictive gameplay. There you have it – turn-based and recommended in the hallowed pages of *PCKL*. Must be good then.

—After reviewing this and SC3K, STEVE KLETT needs to rediscover what "outdoors" means

GRAPHICS

The all-new, 16-bit, 3D-rendered, 800 by 600 artwork is gorgeous.

SOUND

Rich musical score is countered by ho-hum combat sound effects.

DEPTH

You couldn't even see the Titanic on radar if it sank in this game.

DESIGN

A true sequel that does its forbers proud.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Great artwork
- Tons of items and spells
- Tons of scenarios and monsters

- Minuses

- Gets choppy after a while
- Targeting is frustrating
- Surrendering isn't possible

DEVELOPER → Mythos Games
 PUBLISHER → Bethesda Softworks
 REQUIRED → P133, 32 MB RAM, 4x
 CD-ROM, 300 MB hard drive space
 IDEAL → P200, 8x CD-ROM, 275 MB
 hard drive space

Magic and Mayhem

There's only room for one mage in this here town ...



MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

And welcome to another in the continuing series of boxsets with no purpose. Today's edition features *Magic and Mayhem*, a purely 2D roleplaying game that won't look any better even with quadruple SL/D Obolitan X04 boards. But hey, you were just checking, weren't you?



Upon further review, 3D graphics could have helped.



Nothing like a good whirlwind to stir up some trouble.

Magic and *Mayhem* is an RPG/RTS hybrid competing for essentially the same ground as

Monolith's *Rage of Mages*. Developed by Mythos Games, famed for developing the classic strategy game, *X-COM*, turn-based sci-fi alien busting is about the last image this game will conjure up. It is, in fact, one of two things: Either a level-by-level task-based RPG, or a small-scale realtime strategy game.

Regardless, it's actually a fun little diversion. The premise is very basic. As an apprentice mage you get whooshed away to a strange land in search of your uncle, a powerful wizard. The single-player game consists of traveling to new sections on the map, finding tasks to perform and monsters to kill along the way. Well, actually, it's mainly about killing monsters, but there are plenty of strategic, puzzle-like aspects that have to be overcome amidst all that monster slaughter.

Gameplay is an interesting mix of realtime strategy and roleplaying. As the young mage, you start off with a couple of basic monster summoning spells and a fireball. On top of that, you can also bash badness with your cane if you've run out of magic energy. With the requisite power you can summon monsters like zombies, brownies, and other impish, mythological beasts, commanding them to move and fight just as in RTS



Damn, that's a lot of bones ...

games. Levels generally consist of attempting to defeat another mage in a duel, throwing summoned monsters against each other, and sending them to sit on special power spots that replenish your "mana" faster. This allows you to churn out spells quicker.

Success reaps experience points, which are then used to increase your mage's abilities, allowing more hit points, mana points, greater summoning capacity, and increased spell power in specific areas. There are three magic types (chaos, neutral and law), and each has different types of spell and creature-summoning associated with it.

M&M is surprisingly in-depth, and gets more complex as you grow in power, although character tweaking and re-tweaking is a little ham-fisted. Control takes some getting used to, since selecting a spell de-selects your mage, making it hard to move and cast at the same time. Graphics are well-rendered isometric 2D images, the magical and weather effects are well-done, and the characters are detailed and well-animated. Music and sound effects are both excellent to boot.

One of the driving factors of *Magic and Mayhem's* longevity is likely to be the multiplayer game, since it offers a chance to have more personalized bouts of traditional RTS combat. Vying for power points while trying to kill other mages is very engaging, and sure to appeal to both strategy fans and

open-minded role-players. Internet play is supported through Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone.

Overall, this is a polished title that makes something almost original out of familiar elements. It's not state of the art, but solid and enjoyable — and likely to be completely overlooked in the race for big name games.

— JASON D'APRILE *don't spell too good, and his grammar's pore*

GRAPHICS

Sharp, detailed characters and settings that are quite decent, if not exceptional.

SOUND

An evocative soundtrack and well done sound effects.

DEPTH

Extensive character customizability is important here, as are the 35 levels.

DESIGN

Simple to get into, hard to master, and hours of challenge in between, plus, an interesting multiplayer game.

RATING 7

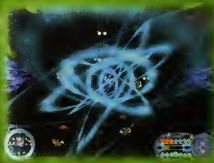
+ Pluses

- Good graphics and sound
- In-depth character growth
- Nice off-shoot of the RTS genre

- Minuses

- Controls aren't terribly intuitive
- The manual tweaking of your character
- A bit repetitive after a while

"IN 1982, HE TERRIFIED A GENERATION OF ARCADE
PLAYERS AND BECAME A CULT FIGURE."



www.thq.com



www.gametr.com



SUMMER '99

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Go to <http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411>: Product Number 76



SOUL STAR[®]
UNLEASHED

HE'S BACK.

RUN, COWARD, RUN.

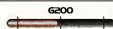
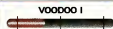
DEVELOPER → PyroTechnix
 PUBLISHER → Sierra
 REQUIRED → P166, 24MB RAM,
 349MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
 IDEAL → P11 266, 64MB RAM,
 10X CD-ROM, 3D accelerator

Return to Krondor

Developer PyroTechnix was closed after this shipped ...

ACCELE-RATED

Both D3D and Glide are fully supported, and there is little difference in quality using either option. The TNT did not have any greater image quality than Glide, and even software mode didn't look bad, with good detail in the characters, in the outdoor environments, it seemed like the True3D software engine was as good as the accelerators.



API SUPPORT: Glide, Direct3D



There's not just people to hack, but with monsters this laughable, we wish it were.



Prince Arutha's palace in Krondor looks imposing from the outside ...

As the sequel to the critically acclaimed 1993 RPG *Betrayal at Krondor*, *Return* was certainly anticipated by author Raymond E.

Feist's fans — a group I count myself amongst. And it is in both appreciation (of Feist's ability to weave a great yarn) and frustration (PyroTechnix' way short of "good" game engine) that *Return* pulls me in two directions.

On the positive side is the story. Headlined by James, the legendary "Jimmy the Hand," *Return* involves a race against the evil "Bear" for the Tear of the Gods that sinks on a ship in a poor rendered cut scene intro. After meeting Jazhara, the new half-Keshian court mage, there's ample opportunity to investigate the city.

James and Jazhara fill two of our four available slots, as you're given five characters to use. William is the next to join, and when he goes off to pursue another line of the unfolding Feist-penned plot, he's replaced by Solon, an Ishaphian priest, and Kendaric, a lynchpin in one of the major plot lines. James' thievery background is used to detect traps and unpick locks, much like the puzzles of the rune-laden books in *Betrayal*. In familiar RPG fashion, each level advancement brings the opportunity to boost the charac-



Using a powerful artifact to turn this demon against his creator made life a lot easier.

ters' skills and stats in any way that you choose.

With over 100 characters to meet, converse, and argue with, *Return* tries to bring Krondor and its surroundings to life over the 11 chapters. But weaknesses in the engine undermine the plot. As the characters move through the flick-screen environments, switching camera angles are often terribly frustrating and confusing. The ability to manually control the characters makes up, to some degree, for the occasional inability to move the characters offscreen using normal point-and-click function.

Combat is turn-based and is tough at the early low levels. Spell-casting effects are competent, but not dynamic. While in more expansive melees, with multiple enemies, the strategy of moving, attacking, guarding, defending, and using items from the massive inventory becomes crucial, it often boils down to the lead character just kicking ass.

The in-combat grunts are bad, often completely out of time with the animations that they're supposed to match. And that's why *Return* is so damned frustrating. I'd heartily recommend the storyline to any fan of the fiction, but that's tempered by chronically frustrating control. The disarming

traps missed me off in seconds — how can a twitch-style mechanism suffer from such appalling responsiveness? The license and world deserve a far better game to bring out its fascinating intricacies.

— ROB SMITH *would've liked a better game*

GRAPHICS

You have to look very closely to tell that it's using 3D acceleration.

SOUND

There is some, though during combat it rarely matches the action. Voices and dialog is competent.

DEPTH

It's a story worth witnessing if you're into the fiction. If you're not, the engine makes it too frustrating to try.

DESIGN

Excellent design in the plot; disappointing gameplay execution.

RATING 5

Pluses

- Story
- Some strategy in combat
- Solid voice acting

Minuses

- Confusing camera switching
- Lifeless combat
- Uninteresting to non-Feist fans

DEVELOPER → The Illusions Gaming Co.

PUBLISHER → GT Interactive

REQUIRED → P133, 16MB RAM,

4X CD-ROM, 155 MB hard drive

IDEAL → P166, 32MB RAM, 2.42 MB

hard drive, sense of irony

Beavis & Butthead Do U

A former cast member's look at the downfall of humanity

ACCELE-RATED

Is anyone really reading this? Look, there's nothing funny here so you could be doing something better with your time. Hey, I know — how about reading those little messages on the side of the page? Those are pretty funny. Beavis and Butthead are two-dimensional and don't need a 3D accelerator. And no, using one won't give their characters any more depth. Sorry.

OTHER DYNAMIC DUOS



BATMAN & ROBIN

They started the "sidekick" craze. A prejudiced man in tights wears a costume with the "word" who wears hot pants and booties

KNOWN FOR → The ability to change into costume while sliding down a pole

LEGACY → Adam West paved the way for William Shatner



SISKEL & EBERT

A tall, thin guy and a short, fat guy who hate each other are forced to review movies together for 25 years

KNOWN FOR → Introducing the thumbs-up as a gauge of cinematic quality

LEGACY → Since Siskel's death, Ebert no longer has a lead-in



BERT & ERNIE

Bert looks like a Coney-head wearing a toupee and Ernie has the second-highest voice of Fernseh. The confirmed bachelor, has lived together for 30 years.

Not that there's anything wrong with that

KNOWN FOR → Ernie's fetish for rubber duckies

LEGACY → Statler and Waldorf, the wacky hogs of "The Muppet Show"

CSPO & R2D2

A mechanical version of Laurel & Hardy featuring an anal-sche-taw robot (the femme) and his calm, trash-can-shaped partner (the dude)

KNOWN FOR → CSPO's whining; R2D2's ability to plug into any computer

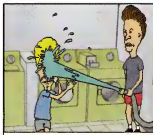
LEGACY → Daria, the Star Trek android, whines a lot and plugs into any computer

When the PCXL staff asked me to review this game, I thought "Oh, good.

Another adventure game based on two inbred half-wits, instead of an intelligent woman who still has her own TV show. Life truly has meaning." My last experience with Beavis and Butthead (aka "the morons") was the adventure *Virtual Stupidity* — a good game, but further proof of why interspecies relationships do not work. Anyway, let's get this over with — I don't want to interrupt this magazine's tribute to the women of silicon.

This time, the guys develop a cure for cancer and — oh, wait, I'm lying ... they're sent to college on a class trip where the chance of "scoring with college sluts" prompts a prepubescent journey into the bowels of academia and lowered admission standards — my bad. Performing tasks for 30 classes will get them into a frat party — just how college was meant to be. This is why I may skip higher education altogether and begin my waitressing career now. Those morons talk a lot about "doing it," which makes me wish that asexual cell division was a valid reproductive option for humans. In other words, they haven't changed.

While the thought of praising *Virtual Stupidity* makes me feel dirty, that game was plot-driven and well written in a stupid way. (That "Diarrhea/cha-cha-cha" taunt was soooo funny.) There are a few moments of unadulterated idiocy in *B&B Do U*, but the humor



"C'mon, Beavis, you need to win that wet T-shirt contest."



"Hey, baby, I think you would like to meet my monkey."

is stale in comparison (with fewer jokes and more reused voice samples). We already know what the ultimate goal is, so most of the game is a treasure hunt to find objects and then figure out what to do with them. Hmm ... I think I just described my sister's existence.

The game looks just like the show, which I guess is a good thing considering the minimum install is 150MB. The boys appear okay close up, but are uglier than I remember when they move into the background. This is because the same drawing is used, but some lines are dropped when the image is shrunk down. My friend Jane is an artist and says this is a sloppy way to change perspective, but thinks it is a minor complaint.

Speaking of sloppy, the design engineers must've rushed the game. Voices trip over each other and there are long delays before a character begins talking. Normally, I wouldn't complain about not hearing those jerks, but you might want to know. Mike Judge, our creator (and thanks so much for the sweet gift of life), performs the



Do U has the most advanced 3D engine ever. Just kidding.

roles of B&B, so the acting is about as good as you'd expect.

But, the game is mercifully (to me, anyway) short and not as inspired as its predecessor, but may satisfy the fans of those two mutated frogs. Or signal the coming apocalypse. Whatever. ▶

— **DARIA MORGENDORFFER** is the star of MTV's "Daria" and former classmate of B & B. Call her a babe at your own risk

GRAPHICS

True to the show, but animated characters are not always well-defined, especially in the background.

SOUND

Mike Judge is the man! But even he can't help glitchy voice samples.

DEPTH

Simple plot turns into a scavenger hunt. A few puzzles are funny, though.

DESIGN

Game feels rushed due to sound and animation glitches. Most puzzles are fairly easy.

RATING



+ Pluses

- Looks like the show
- Feels like the show
- Sounds like the show

Minuses

- No fire
- No frog baseball
- No Daria

DEVELOPER → 3DO
 PUBLISHER → 3DO
 REQUIRED → P90, 16MB RAM,
 150MB hard disk space, 4x CD-ROM
 IDEAL → P166, 32MB RAM

Army Men II

"The horror ... the horror"

ACCELE-RATED

Nope, none, nada, no 3D acceleration at all. Just 2D plastic men.

GAMES FROM THE PAST



How other games from our childhood would do on the PC today

DOCTOR

OLD VERSION → A game where you get to innocently "explore" the anatomy of cute neighbor girls

PC VERSION → Starring Jennifer Love Hewitt as "the neighbor girl"

VERDICT → Who doesn't want to "explore" Jennifer Love Hewitt?

SPIN THE BOTTLE

OLD VERSION → Fresh into puberty, young boys sit around in a circle and take turns making out with the one girl who was dumb enough to play

PC VERSION → Think of it as a multi-player "Love Connection"

VERDICT → It'll end up being a bunch of dirty old men posing as women

SMEAR THE QUEER

OLD VERSION → Throw the ball in the air, let the stupid kid catch it, then everyone piles on. Repeat until kid cries and runs home to mommy

PC VERSION → It would be renamed *Saw: The Gay and Lesbian Community*, so as to be politically correct

VERDICT → Jerry Fallwell is almost playing this game

It's rare these days to see a game that requires only a P90 to play. But with *Army Men II* that low requirement is fitting. The game is designed to evoke grown-up boys' fond memories of the hours they spent playing with plastic army men in their youth. So there's no need for a P11, scads of RAM, and a Voodoo card to set the soldiers ablaze.

And oh how these army men burn! You can melt them with flame-throwers and watch them die a slow, agonizing death on a stove burner, melt them with a magnifying glass, or destroy them in a multitude of ways with conventional firearms. All of these methods succeeded admirably in evoking memories of blowing up hundreds of plastic soldiers when I was 10 years old.

The follow-up to one of 3DO's most successful PC titles (okay, so there haven't been many fitting that description), *Army Men II* picks up where the original left off. You control Sarge, the indomitable leader of the Green troops, as he attempts to rid the world of the Tan scourge. This time, however, you'll do battle in the kitchen, backyard, frontyard, and garage. You'll take cover behind children's toys, salt shakers, and kitchen utensils. You'll fight to reach the high ground of the stairs. And, in addition to the Tan, you'll have

encounters with Grey and Blue troops, as well as plastic zombies. Sometimes you'll fight alone as Sarge, while other times you'll have a squad of Green men to lead.

New weapons at your disposal include an aerosol can and a magnifying glass, which you can put to good use melting enemy troops. You'll also be able to drive the familiar plastic tanks, jeeps, and trucks you may have owned as boy as well. You'll pick up various power-ups and ammunition — flak jackets, camouflage, and other battlefield staples.

The gameplay can be likened to a simplistic C&C-style at the squad-level, with elements of *Gauntlet* and *Return Fire* thrown in. Controlling your men's movement around the map is a simple matter of pointing and clicking and issuing simple orders, such as Defend, Hold, and Rally. Multi-player options include support for one to four people in the now staple Capture the Flag, Deathmatch, and King of the Hill modes.

The in-game graphics are not stellar, the sounds are average, and the gameplay is certainly nothing new. The enemy AI is most likely to brag about — most simply charge straight at you asking to be killed — though some try simple evasive maneuvers. And the AI of your troops isn't much better — they'll stand in a fire and burn (er ... melt) to death if you



Flame-thrower + Tan soldiers = Tan plastic puddles.

don't tell them to move. It can also be extremely, and needlessly, frustrating getting your troops to board a vehicle, especially boats.

But, I found it hard to tear myself away. The game captures the simple charm of the toys I — and most men — played with as boys. You just can't stop blowing the little suckers up.

— STEVE KLETT *once nearly set a house on fire by aerosoling plastic soldiers with an aerosol can*

GRAPHICS

The soldier graphics and animations are quite good, the rest — particularly the special effects — are average.

SOUND

Battlefield effects are average at best. Cool musical score.

DEPTH

Of the kiddie-pool variety. A game meant to relieve stress rather than induce it.

DESIGN

Manages to capture the charm of the real toys.

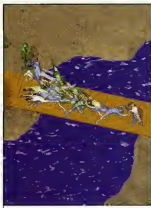
RATING

+ Pluses

- Blowing up bits of plastic
- Melting bits of plastic
- Running over bits of plastic

- Minuses

- Annoying and simplistic AI
- Repetitive gameplay
- Frustratingly difficult in spots



Lambs to the slaughter: The plastic zombies shuffle on.



Blowing up the computer tanks is almost as fun as torching their plastic equivalents ... almost.

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COMPUTER SYSTEMS

DEVELOPER →	ATD
PUBLISHER →	Psygnosis
REQUIRED →	P966, 32MB RAM, 100MB hard drive, 4x CD-ROM, 3D accelerator
IDEAL →	PII 400, 64 MB RAM, TNT card

Rollcage

For the times when you want to be on top and on the bottom ...

FORCE FEEDBACK WHEEL

ACCELE-RATED

The Glide version has a fuzzy, undefined look compared to the Direct 3D version which, when running on the TNT gave a much better picture quality. The speed was fairly comparable, but the image quality is one of those times that highlights TNT's improved performance under D3D.

RIVA TNT



VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



MATROX G200



API SUPPORT: Direct 3D, Glide



If nothing else it's nice to see that all of the sci-fi racers released lately have their own distinct feel. Still, after *DethKarz*, *SCARS*, and *Powerslide*, Psygnosis' *Rollcage* would almost seem redundant. Instead, it turns out to be the most interesting (and fun) racer of the bunch.

Rollcage uses flat, big-wheeled cars that can drive up walls, across ceilings and don't stop even when flipped over. It's also a damned impressive looking game. With 20 tracks spread over four different environments you'll find all the usual Psygnosis' graphic creativity here, with plenty of lens flare, huge (if sometimes irritatingly blinding) explosions, reflective surfaces, cool shadowing, colored lighting, and other impressively chewy pieces of eye candy. Oddly, the cars look toy-like, however, especially in the fast-paced sci-fi setting.

It's certainly best played on a high-end system, and it's not exactly clear why. There's little pop-in of the horizon, not much fogging, and though the game is quite fast, it's not really enough to justify the rather steep ideal system requirements for this game.

In *Rollcage* you don't destroy competitors' cars — it's the



Despite appearances, *Rollcage* is NOT just another clone.

scenery that gets obliterated.

Acquire a missile power-up on the track, target a rock formation or skyscraper on the side of the road, then let it fly and watch the momentous fallout.

That alone is almost enough to say the game rocks, but it gets better. Imagine driving right up a sloping wall and onto the ceiling of a tunnel, then flying straight off the end of that tunnel to hit speed-up points, still upside down. The dynamic camera swings around to reorient the horizon, just as the upside-down car hits the road and keeps on going. Weapons like the Wormhole, which shoots a warp field ahead of the car in front of you, and the Leader missile, which homes in on the first place car, merely add to the explosive action. You'll also find more mundane power-ups like shields and turbo boosts as well.

Sound effects are excellent, although the techno soundtrack seems more like background noise. Control is tight and precise, though not "sim-like," and the force feedback effects are great.

Multiplayer options run the gamut, sporting up to four players via split-screen, along with six-player TCP/IP LAN support. Aside from standard racing, you can unlock deathmatch tracks, where the object is to knock the other player out of the arena. Internet play is possible, and playable, although both the game and options menu need refinement.

Rollcage is proof positive that there's always room for just one more, provided that you're offering quality and innovation. Simply put, *Rollcage* is a total hoot to play. ▶

— *It has been suggested that we place JASON D'APRILE in a cage for his own protection*

GRAPHICS

Great textures, lighting, weather, reflection, and explosions.

SOUND

Excellent sound but transparent, ho-hum English techno music.

DEPTH

20 tracks, neat multiplayer modes, and six cars — a decent arcade racer.

DESIGN

Well designed tracks, plenty of opportunities to use weapons and gravity-defying cars, and great control.

RATING 8

+ Pluses

- Fun as hell
- Great looking and playing
- Speed to make you bleed

- Minuses

- Needs better net play support
- Is that music I hear or the droning of traffic outside?
- The crash camera and those way-too-bright lamp post explosions



Racer sim or tunnel of love? You decide ...

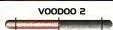
DEVELOPER → Infragames
 PUBLISHER → Digital Image Design
 REQUIRED → P266, 32MB RAM, 215 MB HD space, 4X CD-ROM, O3O/Glide 3D accelerator
 IDEAL → Pii 266, 64MB RAM, 8X CD-ROM

Wargasm

NO: Absolutely no orgasm jokes, just forget it and move on, okay?

ACCELE-RATED

Considering an accelerator is required, *Wargasm* doesn't make massive improvements with any of these cards. The image quality under O3O with the TNT is slightly crisper than Voodoo 2, although there was no noticeable difference in speed. The explosions and smoke are very impressive, especially on the TNT. The Voodoo 2 wasn't as impressive.



API SUPPORT: Direct 3D, Glide



Considering the title of this game, you'd think we'd say something suggestive here — that'd be too easy.

First, let's make something clear: I absolutely refuse to make any of the obvious jokes, anywhere in this review, about the title of this game. If you see any, they were accidents or my editors put 'em there. Nuff said.

Anyway, it's unfair, it's true, and it's just tough: The further we go down the realtime strategy road, the harsher the criteria will be. *Wargasm* has astounding graphics, standard-view and sniper-fire modes, and a real sense that the terrain of a given battlefield actually makes some kind of difference. But that doesn't hide some glaring flaws.

Set in the reasonably near future, *Wargasm* (WAR Ground Air Strike Mission) assumes the existence of a World Wide War Web to settle international disputes. The technologically advanced nations of the world now have the ability to channel their destructive military impulses into a virtual battlefield to solve the quandaries only armored might can answer.

Wargasm takes its cues from action-strategy hybrids such as *Battlezone*, minus the resource management, and puts you in charge of forces composed of 2 types of foot soldiers, 11 types of armor units, and 4 types of attack helicopters. Although these units can be minimally directed from above on a grand strategic map, those with an eye for winning will frantically jump from unit to unit to

achieve direct control in first-person or follow-cam modes.

All the units have their strengths and lamenesses: Independent movement and turret rotation on tanks, for example, means that you can retreat covering your ass with cannon-fire (this operation has come to be known as the "Iraqi Retrograde"). But, inexplicably, these treaded metal monsters become utterly helpless when faced with a simple line of tank traps. Better have some helicopters ready, or find another way.

One of the most irritating features of "modern" realtime strategy games is the mysterious need to physically explore one's environment. It's ludicrous — my car has GPS tracking. Happily, *Wargasm* addresses half the problem with the entire battlefield visible from the start. Problems arise on entering the battlefield when you're asked to assign a finite number of available units to a squad for insertion. You're given two or three possible drop-points, but since you don't know jack about where the enemy is, you're operating almost as blindly as you are in a fog-of-war shrouded RTS game (although air strikes and other drop-points will alleviate this pressure somewhat).

What's fun is the terrain, not only for finding cool ways of sneaking up on the enemy in multiplayer, or multiple *Wargasm*, (their term, not ours) network, Internet, or modem games, but for watching, almost feeling, your speeding tank



Fact: Tanks are big and metal.

slaw up onto a grade or blitz across a field.

This game is hard, and you will want the control patch, which allows you to remap keys. If you have the patience to get good and don't overload your nervous system in the process, you'll feel a definite sense of accomplishment when you win this one.

—As of January 1, 2000, CHRIS HUDAK *baycats* realtime strategy games that don't have nukes

GRAPHICS

Excellent outdoor environments, lighting, fog and smoke effects.

SOUND

Voiceovers are cheesy (a chronic problem in games), but explosions are as good as they come.

DEPTH

For all the game's difficulty — it's still just a slugfest.

DESIGN

Largely competent FPS/RTS with some bizarre design flaws (some are addressed in a patch).

RATING

+ Pluses

- Mind-numbingly pretty graphics
- Excellent use of terrain
- Online tutorials for all units

- Minuses

- Comprehensive strategy mode pretty weak
- Patch required for control
- No strategic and few support weapons

DEVELOPER →	Capcom
PUBLISHER →	Capcom
REQUIRED →	Ps66, 24MB RAM, X-CD-ROM, 0 MB hard drive
IDEAL →	PI 333, 64MB RAM, 300MB hard drive space, Riva TNT card

Resident Evil 2

Opens more doors than a White House internship



GAMEPAD

ACCELE-RATED

Resident Evil 2 accelerates all the character models with nice smooth textures. But it doesn't do jack for the backgrounds, which are the same as the original PlayStation, distorted out to 640x480. 16 bit color max means you can't take advantage of the 32 bit on your ATI or TNT. TNT definitely looks better than Voodoo 2 because of richer color.

RIVA TNT



VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



MATROX GEO



API SUPPORT: Dir, ctyD, Glide



It's all fun and games until someone loses an eye (or hand).

Let me tell you about this great game, *Resident Evil 2*. It's quite possibly the best door-opening simulation I've ever played. It's the way the entire screen goes black as the door appears. Then, there's a moment of anticipation before the doorknob turns, and the door slowly swings open ... the camera moves into the black area beyond the door — truly a moment of beauty, vision, and suspense. The greatest thing is, this is how you'll spend most of your time when playing *Resident Evil 2*.

Just so you'll appreciate the doors that much more, Capcom has provided a sort of "loading game" to amuse you while the next doors are loaded into memory. It's sort of a shifting-POV adventure game where you run around and kill zombies. It takes place in a "spooky" police station. You can tell because there are spooky statues and paintings everywhere, spooky music, and oh yeah, spooky zombies.

There are numerous moving puzzles that are there just so you can get jewel or chess pieces that will open — you guessed it — another door. Woo hoo! It was thoughtful of them to carefully hide all the important objects, but



Spooky police stations: Always a great place to meet chicks.

it felt like a big practical joke if you ask me. "A gigantic alligator? What a neat trick!" I kept expecting the next door-loading interval to be a room full of all the game's characters, yelling "Surprise!"

RE2 starts you on wooden doors, then metal doors, and even fancy automatic sliding doors. The loading games consist mainly of blowing the heads off zombies. This is fun — almost as much fun as the doors. Really, there should have been a lot more blowing up and less running around already-familiar hallways and rooms. I guess they thought that it wouldn't be challenging enough, so off you go ... fighting meaner, uglier monsters, and juggling increasingly bizarre objects. (I don't think I want to know what a "Bishop Plug" is.) The loading game's plot is made more difficult and confusing by (a) distracting events clearly there just to be puzzles, and (b) constant backtracking.

The variety in the loading games is okay, but not as deep as the endless variety of doors (by my count, over 100 in all). There are two main characters, each of whom will encounter different puzzles and situations, but in the same spooky police station. Which, by the way, is connected to a spooky septic plant, which is in turn connected to a spooky "vacant factory," connected to a spooky underground lab. Convenient. Raccoon City really needs to fire their city planner.

But we need to focus on what *Resident Evil 2* attempts to be: The best door opening sim of its kind, anywhere. Kudos, Capcom — you've done it.

— ED LEE found the "A button door opening skip" way too late and is taking it out on this game

GRAPHICS

Hardware-accelerated characters and colored lighting are the only improvements from the PlayStation. Lazy.

SOUND

No new sound effects were added, even though the PC isn't limited to one meg sound ram. Lazy.

DEPTH

There are two paths for the characters, but it's all pretty much window dressing.

DESIGN

This is a lackluster port of a good PlayStation game.

RATING

5

+ Pluses

- One of the few horror games
- As gory as console games get
- Killing zombies is fun

- Minuses

- A distinct lack of effort to take advantage of the PC
- The game hasn't aged well
- Lacks the original's hilariously awful voice acting

RED LINE

"...truly jaw-dropping in scale and design."

- PlanetQuake

"...one game I'll be playing for the sheer enjoyment."

- Computer Gaming World

"If you still think multiplayer action gaming can never get better than the Quake™ games, think again."

- GameSpot

"...will forever raise the stakes for the auto-combat genre."

- PC Gamer

"...Redline should take the 3D action community by storm."

- Gamer's Alliance

"Its mix of driving and shooting works almost perfectly, the engine looks gorgeous, the cars and characters are beautifully designed and textured, the missions and cut-scenes are fun and immersive, and the whole game just gels."

- PlanetQuake

"...fans of auto-combat, along with the huge audience for 3D shooters, have two games merged into one outstanding looking product."

- Gamers Alliance

"...a shooter of epic scale."

- Computer Gaming World

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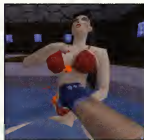
The Test of Time

or "What Were We Smoking?"

The true test of a game's greatness doesn't lie in its first few months of existence, but rather in how it performs down the line. Our reviews are carefully thought out, epic pieces of journalism. But in order to truly judge a game's greatness, we thought it necessary to take a monthly look at how games stand the all-important test of time ...



Buggy Internet play aside, *Unreal* stands as a true classic.



Um, yeah ... well even *Sin*'s cloud may have had a silver lining or two.



Flesh Feast gives new meaning to the term "getting head."

UNREAL

Issue reviewed in: September '98
Game released: July '98

ORIGINAL SCORE



ORIGINAL THOUGHTS → The long awaited first-person shooter finally came out and amazed everyone, including a pre-crack habit Rob Smith. "It boils down to one question: Is *Unreal* better than *Quake II*? Yes — in single-player — but *Quake II* multi-player still rules."

WHAT WE THINK NOW → We said Internet play sucked, but we didn't think it would take them almost a year to fix it. It is still the best looking game on the PC, but without solid Internet play, we just stopped playing.

SUPPORT → The level editor packed with the game and an amazing number of user-created levels kept it going for a while, but everyone stopped playing because net play was so buggy. It also played host to the most heinous deathmatch level ever conceived, our very own Cone Of Tragedy.

HOW LONG IT LASTED → Four months of solid LAN play. We haven't played in a long time, but it still remains on our hard drives — just in case.

REVIEWER'S EXCUSE → "We gave Epic the benefit of the doubt with getting multiplayer right — won't do that again."
— ROB SMITH



SIN

Issue reviewed in: January '99
Game released: November '99

ORIGINAL SCORE



ORIGINAL THOUGHTS → The first of the long-awaited holiday first-person shooters was deemed to have AI that "sucks ass" and "great multiplayer." Technical issues and poor AI kept it one shy of the mighty and prestigious *Killer Game Award*.

WHAT WE THINK NOW → In retrospect, multi-player is pretty lame, one gigabyte of hard drive space is ridiculous, and releasing at the same time as *Half-Life* sealed its fate as "the game nobody bought."

SUPPORT → The *Quake* engine meant *Worldcraft* pros could easily make maps, mods, etc., but all of the talented mod/map makers were busy creating things for *Half-Life*. Add-on pack is in stores now, but this game has already missed the boat.

HOW LONG IT LASTED → When the review and strategy were done, it was deleted off everyone's hard drives (leaving enough room for four new games we enjoyed much more). It was quickly reinstalled for the *Sin*-ful masturbation scene with Elexis, then uninstalled again.

REVIEWER'S EXCUSE → "Elexis hypnotized me with her perulodous bosoms and convinced me that multi-player would be cool."
— ED LEE



FLESH FEAST

Issue reviewed in: September '98
Game released: August '98

ORIGINAL SCORE



ORIGINAL THOUGHTS → "Despite its pathetic graphics, *Flesh Feast* is actually a fairly fun strategic action game." The use of severed limbs and the reviewer's unhealthy love of morbidity also came into play.

WHAT WE THINK NOW → That's what we get for letting a skirt review a game — what the hell were we thinking? *Flesh Feast* is one of the biggest piles of crap we've ever seen, period. It is deserving of a suicide award and we sincerely apologize for not naming this game the first time around — it will never happen again (us being nice to a game or us letting a girl review a game).

SUPPORT → You can still play on Heat.net against the one other person who bought the game.

HOW LONG IT LASTED → Carrie made us install the game to play her in multiplayer (a truly treacherous experience). We grudgingly went along with it, then uninstalled mere seconds after. The computers which were forced to have this game installed haven't been "right" ever since.

REVIEWER'S EXCUSE → "You guys are so mean. It had zombies in it. What a evil!"
— CARRIE SHEPHERD



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~~obsolete~~



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SGRL

They Just Don't Get It

It seems that the people in charge of professional baseball don't have a clue on how to get the sport back on track. Sure, the Roger Maris home run chase brought plenty of excitement back to the game last year, but MLB officials are still very worried that major league baseball doesn't appeal to the youth of America. So, in an effort to make their sport appeal to the ever-jaded young audience, the top minds in baseball reportedly took a page from the recent success of pro wrestling and provocative programming such as "Jerry Springer."

As usual, the aging execs were simply out of touch with the times, and at the last second their ideas were shelved for further review. The following is a list of rumored special events that were dropped by the MLB owners. We think that this time the owners finally made a decision in the best interest of the sport.

MLB's Worst Choices for their 1999 Event-night Lineup

POP THE ORPHAN NIGHT

Cuddly orphans will be placed along the foul lines giving batters an extra target out of the field of play. Each solid hit (determined by the length and pitch of the noise the orphan makes when struck by the ball) is worth a ground rule double.



FULL FRONTAL NUDITY NIGHT

Headfirst slides, players' wives, and catchers in peril ... who needs anything more?

THE MARGE SCHOTT RACIST INSULT NIGHT

Celebrate your right to free speech by bringing your best slurs to the ballpark. Revel as the guy behind you caves in your butt as he celebrates his right to kick the crap out of idiots.



THE TED TURNER RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC INSULT NIGHT

See Above

COLT 45 NIGHT

The first 3000 children under the age of 14 receive a loaded Colt .45 and ten rounds of extra ammo. Kids whose parents don't believe in guns will be given a Colt 45 Malt Liquor instead.



THE SEVENTH INNING YUPPIE HUNT

All season long, during the middle of the seventh inning, fans are encouraged to find the closest person in khakis and beat the crap out of them.

SUPPORT ANIMAL TESTING NIGHT

Each of the first 10,000 fans will get to spray the cosmetic agent of their choosing into the eyes of cute little bunnies, kittens, and spider monkeys, see the results, and receive a free sample of the cosmetic they feel was most effective.



MAKE FUN OF DEAD CELEBRITIES

Players sing the "Na Na Na Na ... Na Na Na Na ... Hey Hey Hey ... Goodbye" song as the corpses of deceased celebrities are wheeled over the infield.

LET FAT GUYS BE FAT GUYS NIGHT

Recent studies have found that 86 percent of baseball fans are described by their loved ones as "lard butts." On this night, beer and hot dogs are all half price and each ticket buys two adjacent seats.



BOO THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS NIGHT

For those fans who have had enough of this "everyone is a winner" talk. By far the worst promotional idea ever conceived. How could these overpaid jerks be so heartless?



THE STANDINGS

The off-season for most of these sports means that we'll have to wait a few months for any new additions. Sorry :(

	GAME TITLE	W	L
BASKETBALL	NBA Live 99	2	0
	NBA Live 98	1	1
	NBA Action	0	2
FOOTBALL	NCAA 99	2	0
	GameDay 99	1	1
	Madden 99	0	2
GOLF	Links LS 99	4	0
	Tiger Woods 99	3	1
	Golden Tee Golf	2	2
	Pro 18 World Tour Fox Sports Golf 99	1	3
HOCKEY	NHL Hockey 99	2	0
	NHL Hockey 98	1	1
	Powerplay 98	0	2
BASEBALL	High Heat 99	4	0
	Triple Play 99	3	1
	VR Baseball 2000	2	2
	HardBall 6 Microsoft Baseball 3D	1	3
SOCCER	FIFA 99	2	0
	Fox Sports Soccer 98	1	1
	Sensible Soccer 98	0	2

NASCAR Revolution

Pretty but painful

DEVELOPER → EA Sports
 PUBLISHER → EA
 REQUIRED → 700s, 33MB RAM, 370 MB hard drive, D3D accelerator
 IDEAL → PIII 500 (maybe), 64 MB RAM, TNT card, and loads of patience

ACCELE-RATED

The box says that it supports Glide, but don't be fooled, *Nascar Revolution* will barely run in Glide mode. It runs, but looks like you're racing through a vat of molasses because the framerate is so slow. The better D3D support your card offers, the better the game will play (so a TNT or the G200 proved to be the best).

DUAL VOODOO 2 SU



VOODOO 2



MATROX G200



RIVA TNT



API SUPPORT: Glide, Direct3D

IS THIS NECESSARY?



The most intriguing feature is *Nascar Revolution*'s use of the cars that just don't look much worse. Here, one tire, that just confused and frustrated the heck out of us.

FULLY POLYGONAL MOTION CAPTURED PIT CREWS

Have people really been complaining that racing game pit crews don't look realistic enough?

ANNOYANCE FACTOR → High

FULLY POLYGONAL DRIVERS AND CAR INTERIOR

I'd rather have a game that runs smoothly than be able to see Dick Trick's face during the race.

ANNOYANCE FACTOR → High

COLOR COMMENTARY

The announcers are really annoying, but if you shut them off you will lose your pit crew help.

ANNOYANCE FACTOR → Through the roof

Just get in the car and turn left. That's all there is to it, nothing more. At its most basic level, *Nascar* is that predictably simple. So could someone please explain why it's so difficult to make a simple arcade-style *Nascar* game for the PC? Pardon me while I vent...

EA promised to make *Nascar Revolution* a fun, arcade-friendly alternative to Papyrus' simulation-oriented *Nascar 99*. They also promised to include enough simulation details to attract the diehard, engine oil-covered *Nascar* fan, but on both counts the result was a major failure.

Just look at the graphics for starters. *Revolution* was supposed to be a clear visual leap beyond Papyrus' *Nascar* series, which is still running on an archaic graphics engine, but it's actually worse. In D3D, the game is unforgivably sluggish, even on a PIII 333 with 16MB TNT. In Glide, the game is completely unplayable. The car models are very well-designed, but with 43 of them in the game at one time, the slowdown renders your car almost uncontrollable. Wasn't this game just supposed to be about getting in your car and turning fricking left?

Even if you are able to achieve a playable frame rate by turning down the detail so the graphics match those in Papyrus' *Nascar*, you still won't be able to control your car. For a laugh, crank your steering wheel or control pad all the way in one direction (say, I don't know... LEFT?) and be appalled as it has little actual



The cars in *NASCAR Revolution* look great, but the racing venues look drab in comparison.



The cars display minor damage very well, but even this high-flying accident won't let you see any major damage.

effect on your car's direction. In fact, if you lock the steering all the way in one direction while driving 180 MPH (which in real life would cause your car to flip out of control) you still barely turn. It's plausible that other racing games would have control issues, since those games require you to turn left and right. *Revolution* needs only ONE direction to turn and it can't pull it off.

As a typical PCXL reader, you're likely to be pretty competitive. Since the framerate is as slow as old people in Georgia and the control as mushy as Jell-O pudding, you might think your best option is to explore the simulation options in order to win. Be prepared to feel like an idiot, because changing options has little effect on the actual control of your car. We tried pumping up two tires to maximum and letting the air out of the others and still didn't see much change in the steering. All we wanted was to get in the car and turn left...

Revolution is a major disappointment because EA has handled the *Nascar* series well on consoles. Had it been playable on even a high-end machine, we might have grown to like it. As it stands, we'll wait until we get our PIII 700's — maybe they'll be able to power this game properly.

GRAPHICS

The cars look great but everything else (including frame rate) is sub par.

SOUND

In-game sounds are excellent, but the soundtrack and commentary sucks.

CONTROL

Horrible, even with a top of the line steering wheel, there's little control.

REALISM

Cars don't crash or deform beyond minor damage and the wrecks feel scripted.

RATING 2

+ Pluses

- Cars look great
- They sound real
- Opponent AI is smart

- Minuses

- Handling is atrocious
- Simulation aspects are minimal
- PIV 700 needed to run

DEVELOPER → Digital Fusion
PUBLISHER → Wizard Works
REQUIRED → P90, 16MB RAM, 50MB hard drive
IDEAL → P96, 32MB RAM, Internet connection

ACCELE-RATED

You won't need a 3D accelerator to play this game, and don't even try running this game in anything but 640 X 480 or your screen will be techie-weenie.

TRICK SHOTS



Recently our own Executive Editor, Bob Smith was off to do and our hener in an industry-wide pool tournament. At stake was the good name of PCXL and, more importantly, a six-foot behemoth metal-like trophy. The competition was fierce, but Bob was able to shut them down with a few mind-boggling trick shots. Here they are. In case you find yourself in a pool hall, with someone who needs another PC game magazine. Practice because you are responsible. To keep up the PCXL name.

#1 DIME FLIP
 Place a dime on the bottom rail but not to hang over the table. Place a shot glass on the wooden rail behind the dime. Shooting from the left, aim your cue to hit the rail by the dime at the perfect pace to flip the coin up and into the shot glass. Chicks dig it.

#2 CUE BALL CORAL
 You challenge your local bar buddy to a simple proposition: Get the cue ball into the triangle without jumping the ball. The solution: Make sure you have a triangle within a wide edge, bottom side, flip it over so the flat bottom surface is on top, set one flat edge 1-2 inches from the side, hit the ball directly on the point of the triangle and it will lift up and let the ball inside.

#3 THE GEORGE WENDT
 The man who played Norm on "Cheers" made a guest appearance during the early days of "HANS" as a marine who led a pool ball stuck in his mouth. We have no idea how he accomplished this feat, but we were impressed. Note: PCXL is not responsible for injuries incurred while recreating this trick.

Real Pool

Psst ... C'mere for a second

Lissen' up kid, I've got something to tell ya. Since the moment I first laid eyes on you, I saw you as an easy mark; the kind of guy who could put my kids through college figuring out three card Monty. I know this cuz I seen you eyeing *Real Pool*, and frankly, you look like all those other middle America know-nothings who buy cheap games just because they're available. But I like ya kid, so I'll let you in on the scam ... this game just ain't got the goods.

I've been playing in the pool halls since before your daddy hit puberty and I know how the balls run, and this ain't it. When hitting a bank shot, the balls sometimes do things they really shouldn't. Sometimes they bounce at crazy angles, other times they don't bounce much at all. The bartender calls it "bad physics," but like I tell that namby-pamby college boy — it's just bad pool.

What's more, this game flat out don't look good. The pool hall in the background is nice compared to them other pool games, but since *Real Pool* is locked into a single resolution you don't get to see much of the surroundings. And since the screen is about the size of a pack of cards if your resolution is set at anything higher than 640x480, you won't be able to see much of the game you're playing either, which is a cryin' shame

because the graphics would look pretty good if only they were rendered in a little higher resolution.

Another cryin' shame is the absolutely moronic computer AI. I've played some idiots in my life and never seen anyone as dumb as the boneheads in *Real Pool*. Sure, you can choose between 18 different challengers, but even the best will occasionally forget what's going on and start sinking your balls, making the single player mode all but unplayable.

Now I know you still aren't convinced. The \$20 price and the easy to learn control are still calling your name. I'd agree wit' you that the price is tough to beat, but get this through your skull, it don't make this a good game.

Sure, the control is tight and easy enough for knuckleheads like you, but you just don't have enough control options to make it worth your while. Even the variety of different pool games such as Spanish Pool and Bumper Pool are not enough salvage this game. Any benefit is outweighed by a lack of options elsewhere. There's no training mode, trick shot mode, or even a freakin' tournament mode.

So, kid, take my advice, beat the Jackson that's burning a hole in your pocket on one round with me. If you win, you can buy a better pool game, if not it won't be much of a loss ...



This is your opponent and a cue stick. She's on the left.

So, you wanna break? ➤

—SAMMY DELFINO often gives unsolicited advice

GRAPHICS

A higher resolution mode would have done wonders to make this game look better on high-end systems.

SOUND

When balls hit, they make noise, but other than that, you won't hear much sound.

CONTROL

Easy to learn, but the lack of real control options takes away much of your ability to try advanced strategies.

REALISM

The poor ball physics keep this game from getting any realism nods.

RATING



+ Pluses

- Cheap
- Easy to learn
- Little chance of getting hustled

- Minuses

- Low resolution graphics
- Poor physics
- Lack of that not-so fresh pool hall odor



Real Pool offers many different pool games, but that's just about where the options end.

Clash of the Titans

On the beginning there was *Dr. J Vs. Larry Bird: One on One*. And it was good. Really good. It featured incredible slams, a tiny janitor that cleaned up the floor when you broke the backboard, and for the first time, gave you control of the real life players that actually resembled real athletes. It was game genius.

From that humble beginning Electronic Arts Sports established itself as a dynasty and the

perennial leader in sports games. Last year Sierra Sports made a few fatal missteps (*Skling 99* and *Football Pro '99*), damaging its credibility as a franchise, while Sony met with low sales for *GomeDoy*, which may have stalemated company plans. Simply put, no one else put together a group of games that could stand as a legitimate contender to EA.

However, this year, and in the near future, EA will have a contender that is not only big

enough to provide competition, but big enough to actually take the crown.

Microsoft only made ripples last year with its questionable baseball title (their *Soccer* game was a mangy dog, while *Full Court Press* blew chunks). This year things already look better for the baseball series, and the company has announced a full slate of sports titles likely to go head-to-head against EA. Here's how the two companies stack up.

MICROSOFT

THE BACKING:

\$30 billion in stock, and counting

THE LEADERSHIP:

Bill Gates and a bunch of hungry, hungry lawyers

THE GLORY OF THE PAST:

In sports, nothing yet, but that Windows software has enjoyed mild success

THE GIST OF THIS YEAR'S PHILOSOPHY:

Concentrate on gameplay over management options and for Pete's sake, dump the 3D-only requirements

SPORTS MINDSHARE:

They own the Seattle Mariners and a lot of people use Windows to launch their EA Sports games

THE BASEBALL FRANCHISE

BASEBALL 2000

STRENGTHS: \$20 price point, features such as a calendar-driven playing schedule, and much improved production values over last year's version.

WEAKNESSES: Last year's version was wretched



THE FOOTBALL FRANCHISE

MICROSOFT FOOTBALL

STRENGTHS: Arcade speed gameplay, great sounds, and very hard hits

WEAKNESSES: Lacking any real management options or name recognition



THE SOCCER FRANCHISE

MICROSOFT SOCCER

STRENGTHS: Developed by soccer fiends Rage Software, fast graphics, quick play

WEAKNESSES: Rage also developed a soccer game called *Striker*, and it sucked ass. One-touch control will take a bit of adjustment for most players



THE BASKETBALL FRANCHISE

NBA DRIVE 2000

STRENGTHS: Tight control, smart AI and yet another \$20 price point

WEAKNESSES: Can't match the flash and dash of *NBA Live* and does anyone remember that last Microsoft basketball game? Well, it sucked worse than the L.A. Clippers



THE GOLF FRANCHISE

MS GOLF 1999 was a minor upgrade of the sloppy 1998 version

THE FINAL SCORE

EA looks to have a clear leg up on Microsoft, but don't expect the software giant to go anywhere soon. Microsoft understands the value of building a product from the ground up, and this first generation of Microsoft sports titles is a strong foundation for what should be a very competitive future. Then again, Interplay, Radical, Sony, Sierra, and Acclaim all had the same plans—and all failed miserably.

EA

THE BACKING:

Millions of frat boy gamers waiting for the next *Madden Football*

THE LEADERSHIP:

A legion of sports jacket-wearing game producers

THE GLORY OF THE PAST:

Everything ever made for the Sega Genesis

THE GIST OF THIS YEAR'S PHILOSOPHY:

Upgrade graphics and other minor details over last year's winner and make sure to fit all new details on the back of the box

SPORTS MINDSHARE:

Everyone knows who EA Sports is. From pro athletes to card collectors, EA Sports is THE name in computer/video sports games

THE BASEBALL FRANCHISE

TRIPLE PLAY 2000

STRENGTHS: Excellent production values, improved gameplay, improved graphics

WEAKNESSES: Last year's version was strong on flash, weak on gameplay. This year's version could tragically be the same



THE FOOTBALL FRANCHISE

MADDEN SERIES

STRENGTHS: The name, the graphics and years of well-tuned gameplay (not too mention hardcore following)

WEAKNESSES: Not many, but it did take a powerhouse machine to run smoothly



THE SOCCER FRANCHISE

FIFA SERIES

STRENGTHS: It is currently the world's best soccer title

WEAKNESSES: Fans may be tiring of the series after playing five FIFA titles in the last two years. But you can never get enough of a good thing, or so Rob tells us anyway



THE BASKETBALL FRANCHISE

NBA LIVE SERIES

STRENGTHS: Incredible face animations, solid play, smooth graphics

WEAKNESSES: Still fails to capture the one-on-one nature of pro basketball



THE GOLF FRANCHISE

TIGER WOODS GOLF is a much stronger franchise at this point (and they even throw in free cartoons sometimes — doh!)

THIS AIN'T NO SKINS GAME.



Links Xtreme



How many times have you secretly wanted to drive the ball into the snooty VIP playing in front of you?

Have you ever put a silent curse on your opponent's next shot?

On the mystical Mojo Bay Country Club, you can curse your rival's shot and watch it corkscrew into a shark-infested water hazard.



Have you ever dreamed of giving your golf opponent a serious handicap with an exploding plasma ball? Let's be honest—we all have.

At Armadillo AI's Demolition Driving Range, you can turn robotic snobs into toast with atomic golf balls.



Live the dream by inviting your fiercest adversary to a game of Death Matchplay on the Dimension X Battlefield!



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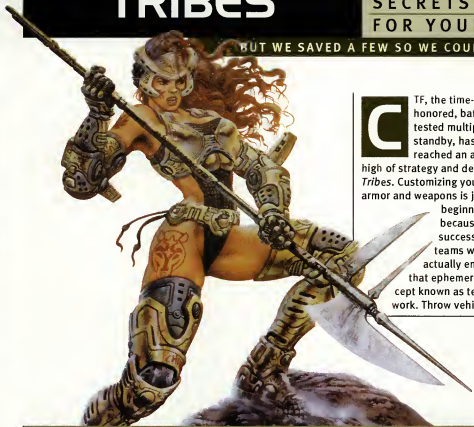
ACCESS
SOFTWARE INCORPORATED



TRIBES

ALMOST ALL OF THE PCXL
SECRETS ARE REVEALED
FOR YOUR BENEFIT

BUT WE SAVED A FEW SO WE COULD STILL KICK YER ASS



CTF, the time-honored, battle-tested multiplayer standby, has reached an all-time high of strategy and detail in *Tribes*. Customizing your armor and weapons is just the beginning, because successful teams will actually employ that ephemeral concept known as teamwork. Throw vehicles,

defensive structures, deployables, and packs into the mix and the strategic possibilities become staggeringly cool. Whether it's a heavy mortar and light targeter taking out a turret, a light pilot driving a bunch of vehicles to an enemy base, two mediums repairing and setting up turrets, or two shielded lights sneaking in to destroy power generators, it's easier to get things done as a team. Keeping this in mind, let's take a look at the nine default maps.

BROADSIDE →

GAME PLAN → The idea is to take out their power, then pound them mercilessly from the front and the top, to prevent them from repairing. Within a minute you should have taken out their plasma turret and have someone in yours remotely firing at their base. You should always have a mortar presence at the front of your base.

OFFENSE → Offensive heavies can make it into the top of the base

with enough patience and a shieldpack to put on some serious hurt. Just clear out the top and prevent them from repairing their power so they can use mortars on you. The flag ferrying needs to be done with lights. For lights, bring along the shieldpack since it's a base level. Head up to the top in whatever team effort you can muster. The pack will keep you alive long enough to take out their power — the earlier in the game, the better.

Once the power's down, keep the pressure in the front with shieldpacks and grenade launchers.

DEFENSE → Defensive minded heavies should stick around their base and rain a constant pounding of mortars on the front side. If you're at the top of your base, enemy heavies at the front door won't be able to reach you. Snipers could be an irritant but are kept in check with targeting laser and sniper support. To kill flag carriers you can set up turrets in the field in inconspicuous places. Turrets along the top corridors, and especially a competent heavy guard, will discourage attacks up there.

HOW IT SHOULD WORK → This level requires patience and teamwork but if you can keep chipping away at their base it can be really hard for the enemy team to try to get back in it. You should have mortars keeping the front sealed, with a few snipers/targeters as support.



POSITIONS → [These are listed in order of importance, so if you have less than eight players on your team, you should still have the essentials covered. If you have more than eight players, start the ninth player at the top of the list, and just cycle on from there.]

- 1 — Light attacker, flag
- 2 — Heavy mortar, front
- 3 — Light attacker, power / stations
- 4 — Mortar cannon gunner
- 5 — Light attacker, front
- 6 — Medium defenseman / turret monkey
- 7 — Light defenseman, roaming
- 8 — Light attacker / spotter / plasma turret



DANGEROUS CROSSING →

GAME PLAN → Pressure, pressure, pressure. It's relatively easy to bust in and take their flag — staying alive once you've got it is the tricky part. The early game is important and can set the tone for the entire battle with a capture or destruction of a station or two, or by mortaring out their turret.

OFFENSE → For captures, load up some grenades and a shieldpack in a light and head to the enemy base ASAP. Jump up to the weak side (the one without the turret) and drop your grenades down the hole. Activate the shield and drop down — book out of there. If all goes well you should still have full health. Teammates should look to get a relay going in the event of your death. Ideally, you'll want support from snipers and some plasmas pounding on the three turrets.

DEFENSE → A few heavies perched on your base are a good deterrent for capture attempts from

above. Meanwhile, a medium can set up turrets around the perimeter, and at the doorways as well, and repair people. Snipers can find favorable perches either on the roof or in the surrounding hills.



HOW IT SHOULD WORK → A successful capture doesn't need an elaborate plan, the trick is getting

out with full health to be able to sustain a few disk hits. A flag relay — that is, several lights escorting the carrier to pick it up in the event of their death — is definitely important to get going against skilled opposition.

POSITIONS →

- 1 — Light attacker, flag
- 2 — Light attacker
- 3 — Light/medium defenseman, turret monkey
- 4 — Light attacker
- 5 — Heavy defenseman, roof
- 6 — Light attacker
- 7 — Heavy attacker
- 8 — Sniper, defensive

DESERT OF DEATH →

GAME PLAN → Disker duels will be the main form of combat, and without inventory stations of any kind, items in the field are your only form of supplies. Since it's easy to capture the flag, a constant defensive presence is crucial for success.

OFFENSE → Grab the energy pack by your base, there's one per team. The repair pack can be good as well if you can find someplace to hide and repair yourself. When attacking the enemy base, sweep around to minimize the attention you will draw, then try dropping down to



their flag from the top of their base. Take a roundabout way home if you can, as most battles will take place in the neutral ground between the two bases.

DEFENSE → The repair pack will make playing defense easier, because getting killed will spawn you away from their base about

half the time. Disc ammo respawns on top of the two pillars in front of your base. On the map, look for the platform to the side of your base — it has a bunch of repair kits.

HOW IT SHOULD WORK → Figure out who's going to do what, then



send the offense to grab and relay while your defense hovers around the base. It's pretty straightforward, any special maneuvers are limited by the fact that there isn't anything you can buy.

POSITIONS →

- 1 — Light attacker
- 2 — Light attacker
- 3 — Light defenseman
- 4 — Light midfielder
- 5 — Light attacker
- 6 — Light defenseman
- 7 — Sniper, roaming
- 8 — Light midfielder

ICERIDGE →

GAME PLAN → Start by setting up a few turrets in the hallway leading down to your stations and in the main room itself. This will free up your defensive heavies to stick to the roof and fend off enemy rushes. Meanwhile, your attacking squad should put constant pressure on their roof and their structures.



OFFENSE → Moving in packs will make your life a lot easier, as whoever gets the initial steal is going to be vulnerable as they fly across the roof getting zapped by ELFs. Going from the back and wrapping around the sides is effective, preferably the side without the enemy pulse sensor. Stick to the sides in your attacking parties, and if at all possible put pressure on the roof, which is bound to have a few heavies standing guard. Standing at the bottom and chucking grenades up is effective, especially with a few people on each side.

DEFENSE → Getting into all or mostly heavies for the first few minutes and beating down the enemy rush is a good idea. One roaming defenseman should keep track of flanking attacks on the flag. Most attacks won't come right down the middle of the valley because it is prime killing field for mortars.

HOW IT SHOULD WORK → Your offense needs to keep steady pressure on the roof of the base, and maybe sneak some opportunistic attacks on the generator and structures. Moving in packs and the flag relay is key.

**POSITIONS** →

- 1 — Light attacker, flag
- 2 — Heavy defenseman, roof
- 3 — Light attacker
- 4 — Light/medium defenseman/turret monkey
- 5 — Light attacker
- 6 — Heavy defenseman
- 7 — Light midfielder
- 8 — Heavy attacker

TIPS AND TRICKS

MORTAR JUMPING

Yes you heard right, its good fun and can be amazingly effective. You need either a shield or repair pack to self-mortar jump or just good aim if you want to fling a teammate. Just make sur. that team damage is off before giving a light teammate a "helpful" push to the enemy bas...

FEMALE ARMOR

You can jump noticeably father with the female armor, and coupled with the energy pack, you'll achieve that elusive "fla on crack" status. Good for diskur duels on maps like DoD.

HEAVY "SKIING"

Credit goes to the H.A.T.E. site for this one. The idea behind this is with the heavy armor, you can ski down a slope and build up a huge amount of speed, then take off with full jets at maximum velocity. Jump normally, while moving forward, then hit jump again immediately after touching down, watch your ass start to fly. This is amazingly cool and fun to pull off. On Iceridge you can ski down from the hill overlooking the base and barrel onto the roof. On Scarabrae, you can ski down the large hill in front of your base and clear the tower to the top of the other hill. It's most effective in groups of heavies.

DONT SHOOT

Sometimes not firing is better. If you have the sensor jammer on a map like Dangerous Crossing, you can just stroll through the enemy base grabbing the flag and sometimes no one will even blink.

SPIDERWEB

This one is trickin funny. Set up a bunch of pulse sensors in your base all in one little area, where you think the enemy is going to cross. Then put up a couple turrets nearby and wait for someone to fall into your trap. Watch them squirm in agony as they are unable to move. Now you can laugh.

RAINDANCE →



GAME PLAN → A fast-paced map where the vehicles are important in getting an early lead. Lots of sniping and long distance engagements due to high visibility. The rocket turret will be strategically important throughout.



OFFENSE → Getting an early capture (inside a minute with a scout) can set the tone for the map by putting the enemy immediately on the defensive. This will allow your snipers and offensive players to get into position and begin administering the hurt. Keep a steady convoy of scouts going to the weak side of the enemy base. Steer clear of the rocket turret and land on the other side of the hill from the flag tower. Drop off your scouts for the flag carriers on foot.

DEFENSE → Keep a heavy trolling around the roof of your base and by your flag, as well as light patrols. However, the most deadly defensive work can be accomplished by manning the rocket turret. By zooming in you can deal out lots of damage. Its great fun too. Protect the flag with turrets and mines as well.

HOW IT SHOULD WORK → While the flag thieves do their work, the offensive players should steadily

pound on the enemy structures — the vehicle pad being an easy, but important target. The rocket turret is a prime target too — it will prevent you from getting airborne while in its field of fire, unless you enjoy dying.

POSITIONS

- 1 — Light attacker, scout
- 2 — Light attacker
- 3 — Heavy defender
- 4 — Medium defender/turret monkey/command station
- 5 — Light attacker
- 6 — Sniper, roaming
- 7 — Heavy attacker
- 8 — Light defender



ROLLERCOASTER →

GAME PLAN → Another offensive minded map, stealing the flag can be a breeze if you have a scout. Scouts and snipers will be the order of the day, with some heavies thrown in. It is possible to completely shut down the other team from doing anything if you destroy their base and keep up the pressure so they can't repair.



OFFENSE → Bring a scout over immediately, as in Raindance, to get the first capture. Scouts can be an actual weapon on this level as they are effective at drawing enemy fire as well as taking out the solar panels. An APC should bring a few heavies over to begin pounding on the base. Snipers will do well on this map because of the great vis-

ibility. Attack the flag with groups of scouts to ensure a capture.



DEFENSE → The first priority is making sure the flag is guarded with turrets and a constant patrolling presence. Having a defensive sniper is a luxury but not a necessity. Keep in mind that the enemy will go for your panels and make sure you have a few snipers around your base. Repairing your panels can be nigh impossible if you're being plagued by snipers.

HOW IT SHOULD WORK → The flag relay team should do their thing, and the base smashes theirs, since its hard to play good team defense on this map you should stay offensive-minded and

try to outscore your opponent. When the power comes down in an otherwise close game, that can pretty much seal it.

POSITIONS

- 1 — Light attacker, scout
- 2 — Light attacker
- 3 — Light/medium defender/turret monkey
- 4 — Light defender
- 5 — Sniper, offensive
- 6 — Heavy attacker
- 7 — Sniper, defensive
- 8 — Light attacker



SCARABRAE →

GAME PLAN → The other of the two "base" maps, this will take more planning and preparation than the others as you have to soften up and otherwise occupy the base defenses so your flag thieves can go in and take care of business. The middle tower is key, not only can you command the rocket turrets to give you air superiority but it gives your team one point, which is all it takes sometimes.

OFFENSE → As far as rushing the flag, the easiest and quickest way is to land a scout on the roof, and jump down to the second level, quickly darting into the right side

hallway, just inside, you'll find a passage in the ceiling that leads straight to the enemy flag. Speed is key because once they get entrenched it can be a bitch getting the flag out of there. Meanwhile, the base smasher team should cause a ruckus at all the entrances. The lower entrance to the right of the airstrip is the



quickest way to the generators, guarded by a single motion turret.

DEFENSE → Have a constant presence by your flag (turrets and whatnot) to deal with thieves. Commanding the middle area and manning the turrets is good. Make sure your power is guarded.

HOW IT SHOULD WORK → Get a capture early before they can get their defense set up, with the scout and a shield pack it shouldn't take long. Then, you can focus your efforts on defense by controlling the middle base as well as guarding the flag and power.

**POSITIONS** →

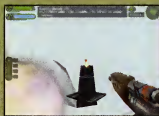
- 1 — Light attacker, flag
- 2 — Heavy/medium defender/turret monkey
- 3 — Light defender, middle base
- 4 — Light attacker, power
- 5 — Light defender, roaming
- 6 — Light attacker
- 7 — Heavy attacker
- 8 — Heavy defender

SNOWBLIND →

GAME PLAN → This map will be well suited for offensive flag rushes because the flag is completely undefended by turrets and it's basically in the front door of the base. In addition, the hilly terrain will make it tough for snipers and even mortars to handle a lot of attackers.

OFFENSE → Rush the enemy right off the bat to try and secure a capture before they can get their game plan set. Take a path down the middle but try to stay clear of the enemy plasma turret on the way. You can also take a second to gear up at the middle inventory station if you're passing through. The energy pack will serve you well on this level. You can make it to the base with only two jumps with light armor and the pack.

DEFENSE → The best place to play defense might be in the top floor of the base itself. Several mediums or heavies with shield-



packs will do the job nicely — if they start mortaring or grenading in, just stay in the far corner. You'll want to have some roving light patrols outside as well. You also should have some people guarding the all-important inventory stations, which are easy to get to.

HOW IT SHOULD WORK → Since both teams will probably be scoring, it may come down to one important tactical move. Whether its getting several heavies over to their base to hold the top, or destroying their stations, it'll be close.

POSITIONS →

- 1 — Light attacker, flag
- 2 — Heavy/medium defender/turret monkey
- 3 — Light attacker
- 4 — Light attacker
- 5 — Light defender
- 6 — Heavy attacker
- 7 — Heavy defender
- 8 — Light midfielder

STONEHENGE →

GAME PLAN → Jumping from rooftop to rooftop is the way to go, since you can make it to the enemy flag in just three leaps from your base. With an energy pack, you can make relays in under a minute.

OFFENSE → It's impossible to go wrong with an early capture before they can get their turrets and defense set up. There are no native defenses around their flag, so be opportunistic and keep up the pressure. Meanwhile, a base smasher unit can go up the passage leading to the heart of the enemy base. This is also where they'll hide in a two-capture stand-

off, that is, when both teams have each others' flags.



DEFENSE → Defensive players will have their work cut out for them because there are simply so many ways the enemy can get at your flag. A few turrets at the flag tower itself should ease the workload. Meanwhile, you've got to make

sure your base is covered. A few heavies lurking in there is a good idea. The best defense on this map is a good offense, and roaming midfield players.

HOW IT SHOULD WORK → The two pronged attack will keep them occupied, and if their power's down, there should be enough confusion to get a few captures while they're scrambling to repair. Getting the flag can be ridiculously easy on this map so the pressure's on to outscore your opponent.

POSITIONS →

- 1 — Light attacker/flag

- 2 — Light attacker
- 3 — Light/medium defender/turret monkey
- 4 — Light attacker/power
- 5 — Light attacker/flag
- 6 — Light midfielder
- 7 — Light defender
- 8 — Light attacker



SAMPLE KITS →



TACTICS → There are too many sniping tips to fit into one paragraph, you could make a separate strategy guide about it. As far as getting set up, if you want to make a so-called sniping nest, first go to the spot with medium armor and a remote station, set up a little defense, then get into the light and start sniping away.

THE THIEF

Armor
Plasma
Disk
Grenade launcher
Chaingun
Shield pack

TACTICS → The thief is your all-purpose flag stealer / base assault combo. The shield pack is the key here. On maps like Dangerous Crossing you can drop down to the flag and come out completely unscathed. It will prove invaluable on Broadside as well, as you trade plasmas and disks with defenders. After an engagement, just find a place to recharge, and you're back in business.

THE ENGINEER

Medium armor
Plasma
Chaingun
Grenade launcher
Disk
Blaster
Repair pack/deployables

TACTICS → This type of player is essential to a winning team effort — they do all the little things that are necessary to win. Set up turrets, sensors, and other defensive structures, repair structures and players, man remote turrets, and other defensive minded tasks. They are also good in enclosed

quarters because of the medium armor's protection and arsenal. Too bad you don't get a lot of points this way.

THE BOMBER

Heavy armor
Plasma
Chaingun
Mortar
Disk
Grenade launcher
Blaster
Ammo pack

TACTICS → A straightforward heavy assault/support type. Bring along a targeter for maximum efficiency. With the ammo pack, you're looking at 20 mortar rounds before you have to reload. If you're going offense, you can bring along a remote inventory station instead of the initial ammo pack, and then buy the ammo pack once that's set up.

THE JUGGERNAUT

Heavy armor
Plasma
Chaingun
Mortar
Disk
Grenade launcher
Blaster
Shield pack

TACTICS → This is a specialized version of the heavy armor that is designed to raid bases and absorb the enemy fire so thieves can get the flag. With a fully charged shieldpack, it can take ridiculous amounts of punishment. The plasma should be your primary weapon, then switching to the mortar as necessary. Its effectiveness is greatly increased in close confines like a base, making Broadside and Scarabrae two of the best maps for this type. ➤

Note → all kits should also have grenades, mines, and beacons.

RIGHT BASTARDS

The following examples of extremely poor sportsmanship are not condoned by PCXL in any way shape or form. So if you see us practicing these methods on a server, it's for testing purposes only.

THE MOLE → One of the oldest tricks in the book. Switches to the enemy team, takes a quick look-see, and then goes back. Good for maps like Broadside and Scarabrae.

THE CANCEROUS MOLE → A mole who shoots his own structures and teammates when no one's looking.

THE MORTARING FOOL → The ones who think they're using the disk instead of the mortar and blow their teammates to kingdom come by dropping one in the middle of a giant crowd.

THE IMPATIENT BASTARD → Shoots his teammate if they're using an inventory station ahead of him.

THE STATION HOG → You know the type. The "I forgot my favorites so I'm going to buy and sell every single thing I can until I get it right" fools.

THE PLANE STEALER → One of the worst of the lot. You buy a scout and turn around only to see someone flying off with it.

THE BACKSTABBER → Sits waiting for a teammate to return the flag at which point he drops a mortar in his base to kill him and steal the glory.

THE CABBIE KILLER → Jumps onboard an APC but then starts shooting the driver as soon as it's airborne. A variation of this, the plane killer will shoot the plane causing everyone on board to die horribly in a gigantic explosion.



**IF SOMETHING BLOWS,
WE WON'T LIE
ABOUT IT.**



News • Downloads • Reviews • Previews • Codes



www.ign.com
Imagine Games Network

A New Kind Of Student/Athlete

There's more to college than getting drunk and getting laid — really!

The last couple of weeks have been spent skipping Anthropology classes and heading to the local campus tavern to cheer on your college team in March Madness. All of this was done for the good of your school, only to have some overgrown punk miss a 10-foot jumper at the buzzer. You aren't 6's, you can't run a 4-4 40, you just aren't comfortable getting half-naked and wrestling other men, so you've given up on college athletics. Well now there is hope for you and millions of other college students who can't even do 10 sit-ups, much less trap block a 370-pound defensive end. It may not get you a scholarship, (and we doubt many girls will be too impressed), but now you finally have the chance to use your skills for the good of your school. What you can do is compete, win money, and finally take down that cross-town rival that beats your college like a drum in every other sport. It's time for you to take a stand. It's time for you to find out what the hell HEATCIGL means.

HEAT COLLEGIATE INTERNET GAMING LEAGUE (HEATCIGL)

FACTS

Web site: www.heatcigl.net
Launched: September 1998
Schools and/or Campuses: 334 participating
Tournaments: Every semester
Most recent: Spring Slaughter Tournament (March 31)
Prizes: \$10,000 in prizes every tournament
Games: Action and Strategy
Campus Leaders: 210
Leading School: Carnegie Mellon University

SO WHAT THE HELL IS IT?

HEATCIGL, as it likes to be known, is a free online gaming league only open to college gamers. The aim is to add multiplayer gaming to the list of inter-collegiate activities alongside more popular pastimes like football and basketball. Whether the co-eds are likely to be lining up to lead the cheerleading processions for gaming tournaments has yet to be seen, but one thing is for certain, there's cash to be won, and for traditionally hard-up students, that's all they're likely to care about. Every semester tournaments are held with prize pools of up to \$10,000 in cash and computer goodies.

A key lynchpin in the HEATCIGL/college relationship are Campus Leaders who promote the league in their respective campuses, recruit members, and fly the flag. In return for their time organizing stuff on campus, they are rewarded with "Degrees" (like, the only way you're likely to get one) that are actually a form of Frequent Player Points. These can be redeemed for games and hardware. So, want to be one? Want to find out more about it? Here's how ...

- Go to <http://www.heatcigl.net>
- Click on "Join HEATCIGL"
- Follow the steps to join HEATCIGL
- Make sure you check-mark the "Campus Leader" box
- Wait for the HEATCIGL rep to contact you



SPRING SLAUGHTER TOURNAMENT

No better time than now to start kicking some co-ed ass

So what are the tournaments like? Here's the lowdown on the Spring Slaughter Tournament. A Pill 500MHz system is up for grabs, just for entering (awarded in a random drawing of all registered entrants), as well as Voodoo 3 cards, and the great honor of winning the HEATCIGL Championship Cup for your school. Once you win the cup, PCXL suggests that you taunt other colleges with it by parading around going, "nah, nah, nah, nah, nah." That'll show 'em.

If you want to practice, these are going to be the settings used in the tournament. Following are the details:

GAME → Quake II (GX Tournament Mod)
TIMELIMIT → 20 minutes
ARTIFACTS → On
WEAPON STAY → Off
MAPS → (To be determined)

The tournament will begin with a total of 128 teams, divided into four brackets of 32 teams each. Each team consists of two players from the same college, each of

which can field a maximum of four teams, one for each bracket.

Teams may also consist of two players from different colleges. If a player has no teammate within his own college, he or she may request a partner. CIGL will attempt to match partners with similar geographic locations whenever possible.

Points gained by mixed teams will be divided evenly and rounded up for each represented college. A mixed team counts as one entry for each college represented in the team.

TOURNAMENT FORMAT →

The tournament will be single elimination until the Semi Finals. For all rounds, players will be notified of their times to play via e-mail. During tournament play, demos must be recorded by each of the participants.

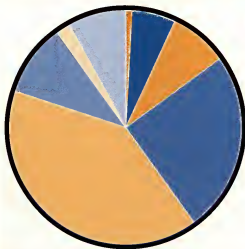
The tournament "seeding" will be as issued on past performances of teams whenever available, and randomly when it is not. Schools will be positioned so that there will be only one team per college in each bracket.

CAN YOU SAY TALENT?



Who says geeks can't "pick up" cheerleaders? Two, even!

A PCXL INFOGRAPHIC HOW DO COLLEGE STUDENTS SPEND THEIR TIME



- 1% STUDYING
- 6% CHEATING
- 40% GETTING LAID (YEAH, RIGHT)
- 25% TALKING ABOUT HOW THEY (SUPPOSEDLY) GOT LAID
- 4% GETTING DRUNK
- 10% SURFING FOR PORN
- 2% RESEARCHING HOMEWORK ON INTERNET
- 8% TRYING TO FIND A PARKING SPOT

HOW TO GAME AT SCHOOL

At PCXL we understand how busy (and destitute) a student's life can be, but we have some ideas for how you can clear up that schedule and make gaming a reality.

#1 GET A SYSTEM MADE FOR GAMING

Your best bet is to convince your parents that you can't possibly write reports on anything less than a PII 450, and how can you research those reports on the Internet without access to a cable modem? Clearly you NEED these

things if you want to get through school. If the 'rents can't afford it, (or are just too damn cheap) then there are some sleazier methods to getting said machine. Student loans come in the form of a check — to you. If you budget your classes (take only a couple) you'll have plenty of money leftover for

that supersystem. Just don't blame us when you are 30 years old and still a few classes shy of that elusive degree.

#2 MAKING TIME

Between classes, drinks, and the endless pursuit of landing in someone else's dorm room, college students aren't left with much time for gaming. We would never suggest that you cut into drinking time or time on the prowl. Who says there aren't ways to be smarter with your time? First off, that sexy girl down the hall

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS



"We have to stand here shaking these stupid things until the geek with the computer gets in a good frag. Or did he say 'shag'? What—ever ... GOOOOOOOO HEATCIGL!!!"

SCHOLASTIC PERKS



"Dude, come here, you've got to take a look at this."

who considers you a friend now, will consider you a friend forever, so give it up. Second, you don't have to study for Philosophy tests, just learn a few names and argue your own philosophy — it worked for us. With useless pursuits like companionship and education out of the way, you should have plenty of time to get a couple hours a day for gaming.

#3 GET GAMING FRIENDS

Playing games alone sucks. Guaranteed, there are plenty of other gamers on your campus, but walking around in a *Quake II* T-shirt isn't going to find you any gaming friends, and will likely drive away that cute co-ed you were thinking of approaching. Go online, play games, chat, check bulletin boards, and try out HEATCIGL. Do all of these, and you'll surely find some like-minded individuals for the perfect pre- and post-party sport. It's a lot safer than drunk nerf basketball. We have the scars to prove it.

ZONED OUT

What are people playing on the big monolithic online gaming sites? We decided to check out the state of things on the Internet Gaming Zone to see just how many people are playing *Spodes* instead of *Quake II*. And what we discovered may shock and amaze you.

(all numbers from Internet Gaming Zone, March 10, 1999, 3:22 PM PST)



Shogho → 11
11 people? And 105 playing *Outlaws*? Clearly not many people read our January cover story. That's almost a 10-to-1 ratio. It's also probably a 10-to-1 ratio of the amount of size it takes up on your hard drive.



Urban Assault → 1
Current player ratio of other Microsoft game *AOE* to *UA*: 2195 to 1. Hmm, maybe they should bundle this stinker into Windows 2000, then people might actually play it. Until they discover *Minesweeper*, anyway.



Star Wars Monopoly → 1
One person sits, forlornly waiting for someone to join.
PCXL → Ok I'll play but only if I get to be the Wookiee.
(no response)
PCXL → Ok fine, you get to be the Wookiee, I'll be Jabba then, ok let's roll to see who goes first.
(no response)
PCXL → Ok, why don't we roll to see who gets to roll first.
(no response)
PCXL → Ok, I'll be going now.



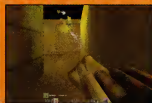
Dominant Species → 0
Big shocker. You know the only reason this is even available is because of a some insane deal with Red Storm.
(PCXL joins room "Pu Valley")
PCXL → Hello? Anyone here?
ECHO → No one's been here since the game shipped, you idiot.
PCXL → Ok, I'll be going now.



Bottleship Classic Edition → 1
How can you play *Bottleship* with yourself? This patient person is still awaiting confirmation of his "E7" opening move.



Age of Empires → 2195 (with expansion pack)
This game is still staying steadily popular, with almost as many people playing the recently-released expansion as the original game. That's always a good sign in a game's life cycle.



Quake II → 238
Well, tons of people have this game so it makes sense that some of 'em will be playing on the Zone, though we can't really imagine why. That 238 people would put up with lower pings just to play on the Zone is a testament to its popularity.



Rainbow Six → 1226 (normal + Eagle Watch)
Tons of rooms — its good to see people are still playing the hell out of this game. Please, people, get away from Airport and Road Ambush — they suck!



Star Wars Rebellion → 20
Star Wars Rebellion? What the hell is that? Oh yeah, it's that assified turn-based strategy game they made a while back. Uh... damn.



Spodes → 3294
It's comforting to see that in today's fast-paced, hardware accelerated world, people still go back to the simple pleasures of life.

(PCXL joins room "The Lodge")
PCXL → So who's up for a rollicking game of *Spodes* tonight?
RANDOM PERSON → Table 17 opening now
Etc., etc.
PCXL → So is this one of those chat rooms I keep hearing about?
Bunch of enter/exit messages
PCXL → Well, bye.

The popularity of *Age of Empires* and *Rainbow Six* is a bit misleading, because there were only a few hundred people playing *Quake II*, not because it's less popular, but because *Quake II*'s networking interface is set up a lot differently. But it's strange to see that some good games like *Shogho* somehow didn't find a big multiplayer audience — on the Zone anyway.

So do these examples just show a lack of willingness to try new games, or a barometer of what people are really playing online? Probably both. 'Til next time, I'll be playing *Spodes*.

JOIN THE PCXL TRIBE

That's right, PCXL the most badass game mag is putting together a tribe to play with Tribes. We're looking for the best and the brightest, but boring that, we'll settle for the belligerent and the boozards. If you're interested, send in a e-mail to tribes@online.com and we'll send you the where and when. We're going to run a bunch of drills, so start practicing the following:

- 6- tting from one end of the ridge to the other in 60 to 1.1, as than 1 minute, with less than 25% caffeine, damage
- Switching to the other team and destroying all the structure in broadside, then switching back and stealing the flag, all in under two mind. s
- Flying at full speed, hit a scout with the disk, as fast as five attempts at an meters (if you don't understand, you shouldn't apply)
- Fighting one of the ditors for a 3-sec. die and killing them on when fighting EA, getting him down to 50% health officially qualified)
- More stupid stuff as we see fit



Theocracy meets bureaucracy

A detailed report on what happens when a game really sucks

The cancellation of a little-known game named *Theocracy* hardly registered in industry news when Interactive Magic announced its demise this February.

A spokesperson for I-Magic, the planned publisher of *Theocracy*, said, "The reason we cancelled it is that it really doesn't fit with our new strategy of only producing 'AAA' titles that have more of a mass appeal and better graphics." I-Magic, troubled with falling profits and low stock prices, decided to cut their losses and cancel a project they felt would not sell. But they made one mistake: They forgot to tell the developer.

One day later, Philos Labs released a statement of its own. The Hungarian developer answered I-Magic's claims in four points. First, Philos Labs is still in contract with I-Magic and had not been informed of the cancellation. Second, the game is nearly finished, the graphics are improved, and it will be the "killer" of *Age Of Empires 2*. Third, they believe that Philos Labs is fully capable of producing "AAA-quality" titles due to a "large capital investment" into the company, making it "the most



professional game developer company in Hungary." And fourth (in a parting jab at I-Magic), Philos Labs is considering a change to a "AAA publisher" for *Theocracy* and listed the URL for I-Magic's current stock price through NASDAQ (an unimpressive \$3-\$5 dollars per share). Strong words indeed for a little company that has yet to ship a single game. The last game the team designed (as *Morbid Visions*) was *Perihelion*, published by Psygnosis in 1993. That same team formed Philos Labs in 1995 and began on *Theocracy* in 1996.

Could this really be the "most professional" developer in Hungary? Not exactly, says Gabor Kadas of Human Soft, who worries that publishers won't want to deal with other Hungarian developers if they perceive Philos Labs to be the

(Left and inset) "The most professional game developer company in Hungary" or perhaps the new "geeky" cast for "Saved By The Bell" — your call.



best of the bunch. After opening an office in Hungary over five years ago, Human Soft employs 30 people and has had seven titles published. "How many titles have Philos Labs done in Hungary?" asks Kadas, "To the best of my knowledge, this is their first one."

Interactive Magic would not comment on Philos Lab's press release, but did give **PCXL** the latest build of *Theocracy* so we could judge for ourselves. What we attempted to play was a buggy mess that offers no competition to **AOE2**. Units in the single-player refused to follow commands and the multiplayer continuously crashed before a LAN match could be started. After seeing the results of two years of work, I-Magic's reluctance is understandable.

When contacted for the newest screenshots available, a Philos Labs' spokesperson replied that they would send them ASAP — in about a month. From what we've seen: Thanks, but no thanks. ➤

Every weekday on our website we frag whatever the fuck makes us angry, and occasionally we frag something just because it needs it. Find out what we fragged today on www.pcl.com. You'll come for the frags, but you'll stay for the CRAZY NEWS AND BABES.

THE POWER METER

After a month off for our April Fool's edition (you did know it was a joke, right?) the big players are back in action, battling for the #1 position.

THIS MONTH: ELECTRONIC ARTS

LAST MONTH: SIERRA

1 - **ELECTRONIC ARTS** → The software giant is approaching the lucrative sports game season and faces no real competition.

2 - **SIERRA** → They recall *MFL Football Pro* and close up internal developer Yosemite Entertainment, yet still have more good games than any other company.

3 - **LUCASARTS** → Star Wars Episode 1 and two new games released simultaneously should keep the Lucas Ranch in good shape.

4 - **MICROSOFT** → Digital Anvil and Sports Inneup were a bit disappointing, but Bill Gates' little software house is still doing just fine.

5 - **WAL-MART** → The most powerful retailer in the games industry has announced that they will no longer sell 3D accelerated only titles. Several companies are now planning software modes.

6 - **NVIDIA** → 3DXF buying STB means that all chip manufacturers are now supporting nVidia and the TNT chipset. Diamond/Creative/etc. could take 3DXF off the top spot.

7 - **METABYTE** → Creating SLI mode for TNT, TNT2, and maybe even Woodoo 3 shows the kind of creativity that is, at the very least, making Metabyte unique.

8 - **BLIZZARD** → Diablo II will set sales records matched only by Blizzard's own *StarCraft* and the original *Diablo*.

9 - **VALVE** → Half-Life continues to be in the top ten sales charts and great support means plenty of shelf-life. Now where the hell is *Full-Life*?

10 - **ID** → *Quake II: Arena* WILL make online-only games a legitimate genre, and the game will kick major amounts of ass.

OTHER CONTENTS
INTERPLAY → Bethesda's *Goth* is selling like whores in Alaska (really well) and with *Kingpin* and *Phonoscope* coming, Interplay might just recover the \$150 million dollar loss of '98. Maybe.

NOWHERE IN SIGHT
RIPCORD GAMES → Shut down, reopened. One problem: Still no decent games.

FANTASY FRAG

BACKSTREET BOYS

WHY WE HATE THEM → They are the Spice Girls of pretty boy pop. Backstreet's back? Back from where? Why don't they just stay there? This latest edition of overhyped, pre-pubescent teenyboppers, in the vein of such groundbreaking musical acts as New Kids on the Block, and their south of the border compadres, Menudo, makes us sick. Why? Newsflash — no matter how tight their pants are, or how elaborate their videos might be, they suck. Any musical group whose biggest hit involves the name of the group itself, is, in our book, a joke.

HOW THEY SHOULD BE FRAGGED → By this time next year, nobody (including their pre-pubescent fan base), will remember who they are, so they will eventually frag themselves. In the meantime, their managers and promoters should be forced to wear dangerously constricting pants until they are permanently converted to sopranos. Meanwhile, anyone over the age of 14 who actually admits they bought one of their lame records should be forced to perform ridiculous dance routines until they go into renal failure.

UNEXPLOITED GAME LICENSES

There's never been a better time to acquire a good license for one's game. The key thing to remember is: Everything is a potential hot license if you look hard enough. Look at *Star Wars*. What's true for them must be true for everybody. If you're stumped, PCXL has prepared a list of licenses developers and publishers should really consider using. If you see something you like, snap that shit up!

SNAP PRIVATE RYAN



THE RATIONALE→ The Oscar-nominated WWII drama is perfect for a realtime strategy

game or first-person shooter. Taking a cue from the way in which the opening sequence was shot, the player would assume the role of a combat photographer trying to capture the most graphic deaths possible, until his own, gruesome decapitation – everyone cries, credits roll
PLUSES→ Until violence stops selling games, don't mess
MINUSES→ Something about maintaining the integrity of the film
SAMPLE GAMEPLAY→ Crawl five feet, get your head blown off



YAN CAN COOK

THE RATIONALE→ The success of Asian stereotypes in "Rush Hour" and "Martial Law" will carry over

into this third-person action cooking game featuring Yan and his flying kicks, lightning-quick knife skills, and thick, caricatured Chinese accent
PLUSES→ It's educational AND fun!
MINUSES→ No precedent for Wok-based gameplay
SAMPLE GAMEPLAY→ You kick someone in the head while at the same time you frantically dice green onions to bits



V.I.P.

THE RATIONALE→ Pamela Anderson will wear revealing, restrictive clothing and pose for the box cover. The rest will take care of itself. You won't have to worry about programming, art, or design.

PLUSES→ Little development "talent" necessary
MINUSES→ Sales should probably take a steep hit after the first, oh, hour or so
SAMPLE GAMEPLAY→ Put the CD in, wait for the autorun to start, hit "install"



KISS: PSYCHO CIRCUS (TAKEN)

THE RATIONALE→ This dark comic book features an alternate reality where the

members of legendary dino-rock band KISS have supernatural powers. Maybe there's a game in here somewhere, in the form of a mix and match interactive program along the lines of *Borbie Fashion Designer*
PLUSES→ Don't underestimate the fashion design game market
MINUSES→ Competition from *Borbie SAMPLE GAMEPLAY*→ Change Gene Simmons's face-paint to look like Tweety Bird



PC ACCELERATOR: THE GAME

THE RATIONALE→ A replaying game where you get to play the part of your

favorite PCXL staffer. Live out the incredibly interesting and exciting life of a PCXL editor. Yes, 80-hour weeks, bad food, and low pay can be yours too!
PLUSES→ Work on America's "R1 Games Mag" and "Best Dressed Games Mag"
MINUSES→ Playing a game of *Quake II* within a game is bound to be tricky, but essential to get the full PCXL experience
SAMPLE GAMEPLAY→ Work on X-tra for five minutes, then play *Tribes* for an hour



MCDONALD'S

THE RATIONALE→

The assortment of colorful characters McDonald's has created over the years is

a veritable goldmine waiting to be exploited — Mayor McCheese, Hamburglar, and of course, Grimace
PLUSES→ Potential tie-ins with coupons for delicious McDonald's food
MINUSES→ Some characters haven't been seen in years. Will people remember?
SAMPLE GAMEPLAY→ As Mayor McCheese, run for re-election while protecting your giant head from the Hamburglar and his burger thieving gang



THE DANCING BABY

THE RATIONALE→ Who doesn't like the dancing baby? Outside of causing

seizures in a few unfortunate individuals who are averse to seeing a hideous abandonment of nature gyrate wildly, the Dancing Baby craze should pay off in big sales for a third-person adventure featuring everyone's favorite computer animated freak
PLUSES→ It will cash in on the buzz generated by *Messiah*. There is a buzz, right?
MINUSES→ A reality-based engine would mean pooping, and no one wants to be a part of a dancing baby with soiled diapers
SAMPLE GAMEPLAY→ Possess the bodies of prostitutes and dance, baby, dance!



THE NEW VW BEETLE (TAKEN)

THE RATIONALE→ The new Beetle is all the rage with

twenty-ish latte sippers, thirty-ish moms, and iMac owners. Naturally, someone should make a racing game where you get to take that fruitlicious Beetle for a spin and even race against other like-minded individuals

PLUSES→ Cross platform means you'll be able to play this game on your iMac
MINUSES→ Could be slight resistance to taking the Beetle seriously as a car
SAMPLE GAMEPLAY→ Parallel park your Beetle at 45 degree angle in San Francisco



STAR CRAFT

THE RATIONALE→ The game is so

successful, another company should license the *StarCraft* universe and make their own game based on it — in another genre, of course. First-person shooter is obvious, but then you could also have a platform game with the jumping Dragon, Vulture Racing, or a Wrath flight sim.
PLUSES→ Instead of making a poor imitation (*Domination*), you might as well bring the real thing.
MINUSES→ It's bound to be just a little expensive convincing Blizzard this is a good idea
SAMPLE GAMEPLAY→ *StarCraft*, but better!

GAMESCAN

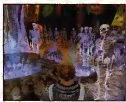
THE JERRY FALWELL EDITION

Jerry has been a busy boy lately, what with protecting the public from the moral threat of purple-clad midgets and all. So, instead of bothering the Fal-guy himself, we have cloned an exact double to give us his thoughts on games we couldn't include in our regular Preview section.



KISS PSYCHO CIRCUS

Developer → Bloodshot
Publisher → GOD
Release Date → Hell if we know
The Sermon → Sure to be the only game of the year based on an old rock band. And with a team of ex-Dotkom designers leading the way, it will either be a great game or *Tropeser* in greasepaint
The Sin → "Parents should be aware that, while this so-called game is being released by GOD, it is anything but heavenly. Loud rock and roll music, lasciviously elongated tongues, old men in tight spandex, and one really bad ballad are signs of demonic activity"
The Punishment → Bandmembers must dress as nuts for next tour



ULTIMA ASCENSION

Developer → Origin
Publisher → EA
Release Date → Q2 '99 — Or Not
The Sermon → The long-awaited final (7) episode is the first *Ultimo* to enter the wonderful world of 3D acceleration. And the *Ultimo Ascension* moniker cleverly hides the fact that it's the sequel to *Mario ... err ... Ultimo VIII*
The Sin → "Lord British is the Satanic perverser of America's youth. *Ultimo* games are filled with occult references, child abuse, and violence. And those outfits make him look faggy"
The Punishment → Moral Majority takes over *Ultimo Online*



WAGES OF SIN

Developer → 2015, Inc.
Publisher → Activision
Release Date → Out now
The Sermon → This expansion pack adds 17 missions, 30 enemies, 7 weapons, and a new mob boss (sorry, it's a guy). The drawback is that ownership of the original *Sin* is required — which nobody bought in the first place. Additionally the add-on pack should come with its own 1 gigabyte hard drive, that way the game wouldn't sully (not too mention completely fill up) your regular hard-drives
The Sin → "Glorifies the act of unrepentant sin, Sin, Sin, Sin!! Forgive me, for I have sinned! Oh, sorry ... Everything about this game is a sin, especially the secret Elexis "self-gratification" scene showcased in last month's PCXL. I hear it's still available on newstands everywhere, though"
The Punishment → Elexis not included in add-on



DARKSTONE

Developer → Delphine Software International
Publisher → GOD
Release Date → Q2 '99
The Sermon → Another hack-n-slash roleplaying game with an isometric view, this one looks like *Gauntlet Legends* but aims for the depth of *Diablo*
The Sin → "D&D-type roleplay has been known to damage impressionable youth with its focus on devil worshiping, lusty barmards, and characters that look strangely like my former secretaries"
The Punishment → GOD meets God on "Celebrity Deathmatch" — unless, of course, you send me, Jerry Falwell, 30 million dollars

THE WOMEN WE LOVE TO PLAY

For all the fun we've had over the last year skewering *Daikatana*, we'll admit one thing ... Mikiko's got it going on. While most of the images we

have seen of this time-traveling mistress show her in full armor, this drawing is apparently a hot picture from her vacation. (It seems the main characters from the game have plenty of time off in recent months due to the tribulations at Ion Storm.)

Hopefully, *Daikatana* will eventually come out and we'll get to see her in

action. In the meantime,

Mikiko, wish you were here!

MIKIKO



COMING OUT

While the status of *Daikatana* is constantly in doubt, one key element that could easily be dropped is the AI partners Superfly and Mikiko. So in honor of Mikiko, the girl who may never come out, we'd like to feature a few who have



WAMI BECHT

LOSS FOR US GUYS → 7 (out of 10)
WHAT WE'RE MISSING → Cute face, ability to act like she's interested in guys, and playful appearance
WHAT WE WON'T MISS → Sexually volca, whacked-out hair, bad taste in partners



NICOLE THERIDGE

LOSS FOR US GUYS → 3
WHAT WE'RE MISSING → Sexy songs we thought were written for us
WHAT WE WON'T MISS → Everything else



DIANA BERSHON

LOSS FOR US GUYS → 4
WHAT WE'RE MISSING → We don't know if she really is gay, but she's played some great looking lesbians
WHAT WE WON'T MISS → The creepy image of her appearance in *Showgirls*



TRACY WINTY

LOSS FOR US GUYS → 4
WHAT WE'RE MISSING → Uh, her, uh ... her, uh (really things) (how this is ironic/not-ironic)
WHAT WE WON'T MISS → The creepy voice and freaky-looking baby son that is always staring down on Finley

ADDICTED TO PORN?

Porn is near and dear to the hearts of almost all PCXL staffers (except Hector — though his repeated viewing of the Scarecrow-stuffing scene in *The Wizard of Oz* worries us), but we understand that some people have a problem with it. Mostly, the problem is not being able to find the good stuff, memorizing passwords, or dealing with those annoying GeoCities pop-ups. But sometimes a good thing is taken too far and the dreaded "A" word comes to haunt the happy porn-hunter. No, not Alyssa Milano's mom — we're talking "addiction." Are you addicted? Take our quiz and find out.

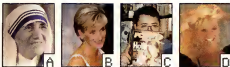
Your favorite character in *Wing Commander 3* was?

- A. B. C. D.



The celebrity death that most moved you was of?

- A. B. C. D.



Which of the following porn stars is really a video game console?

- A. B. C. D.



If you could be famous, you would like to be?

- A. B. C. D.



The classic game of your youth was?

- Pong
 Asteroids
 Street Fighter II
 Custer's Revenge

Which of these shady looking characters is actually a world famous porn star?

- A. B. C. D.



Describe the online porn experience which best describes you?

- BPCXL's Babe pics (www.pcxl.com) are all I need
 Adult Check refers to me as "the hand that feeds them"
 You mean there are newsgroups that don't start with "alt.binaries"?
 My home has its own Ts connection and my 10GB hard drive is full of IPEGs

Your favorite comic book growing up was?

- A. B. C. D.



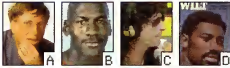
In the Clinton scandal, you most identify with?

- A. B. C. D.



Your personal hero is?

- A. B. C. D.



For every answer of D, give yourself zero points

For every answer of C, give yourself one point

For every answer of B, give yourself two points

For every answer of A, give yourself three points

Your score:

25-30 Check your pulse — there's a possibility you may be deceased

20-24 You've ogled a *National Geographic* or two

15-19 You keep that stack of *Ploypops* for the articles, right?

10-14 A happy, healthy porn-hound (if such a thing exists)

5-9 You've got a problem. Remember to type with both hands

1-4 You are sick and perverted! Looking for a job with PCXL?

o We've taken the liberty of booking you into the Betty Ford clinic for a few months. We don't know if they can help with porn addiction, but at least you'll be kept off the streets

GAMESCAN



DEMON SPAWN

Developer → J.C. Research

Publisher → Tri Synergy, Inc.

Release Date → Q2 '99

The Sermon → Described by the PR types as *Diablo* meets *Starcraft*. We don't know about that, but think of it as *Baldur's Gate* encounter by heavy plot. Includes a magic attack that looks like a swarm of menacing green sperm

The Sin → "What other proof of PC game debauchery is needed? Like the movie *Rosemary's Baby*, this 'demon semen' is being sent to impregnate our young people and create a hellish army of evil"

The Punishment → Watching non-stop episodes of HBO's "Spawn" animated series, complete with Todd McFarlane's excruciating intros (the satanic pain of it!)



MIDTOWN MADNESS

Developer → Angel Studios

Publisher → Microsoft

Release Date → Summer '99

The Sermon → This is truly a new breed of racing game. You have the freedom, no, the liberty to drive anywhere you want in a massive, fully alive version of Chicago. You can also drive like a madman through more than 65 KM (the devil's measurement) of traffic-filled streets in any of so real-life vehicles

The Sin → "Racing games are supposed to be boring and straightforward. *Midtown Madness* breaks all bounds of respectable behavior by enabling players to choose their own paths and wreak havoc on anything that gets in their way. Sick and twisted!"

The Punishment → *Midtown Madness* should be patched by the developers of *Sierra's Driving School* so the whiny driving instructor from that game will yell in player's ears every time they break a traffic law



LOOSE CANNON

Developer → Digital Anvil
Publisher → Microsoft
Release Date → Spring 2000
The Sermon → From the demented maker of the *Crusader* series, comes a game with even more violence, destruction and mayhem. (Loose Cannon mixes vehicular combat with straightforward action gaming. Players can drive more than 15 customizable vehicles, fight with countless weapons, and interact with NPCs in a coast-to-coast trek through 12 enormous countryside environments)

The Sin → "Non-conformity. I have seen many a game that tries to give players freedom in how they solve missions, however this game lets players solve missions in any way their creativity will allow. But besides that, the biggest sin is the name. *Loose Cannons*... another sexual reference. Send me money!"
The Punishment → An eternity spent with the spirit of William Conrad, the original "Cannon"



ALLEGIANCE

Developer → Microsoft
Publisher → Microsoft
Release Date → Winter 2000
The Sermon → Until now, "massive-level multiplayer" meant that a game had graphics as ugly as Freddy Krueger, but this title is fast, furious and detailed. Players choose between 30 unique vehicles and can communicate between squad leaders quickly and easily
The Sin → "Because this game can support up to 350 players, games are going to be spending more time on the Internet, and we all know where that leads... porn! Before you know it, you're watching a lady have relations with an aardvark!"
The Punishment → *Allegiance* should be forced to return to 2D pictures. There'll be a lot fewer people addicted to aardvark sex

PCXL CLASSIFIEDS

Jobs the industry should be advertising for!

Developers To Gather

Omnipotent being in search of "hot" developers to congregate. We'd prefer if you aren't making Cessna simulators, cutesy platform games, or first-person shooters based on washed up rock bands. Please contact GDD.

SEEKING AAA TITLE

Games publisher seeking games which aren't complete shit. Non-Hungarian developers please contact Interactive Magic.

SEEKING AAA PUBLISHER

Top Hungarian developer with hot new game seeks "AAA" publisher (Interactive Magic need not apply). Please contact Phylax Labs.

LOOKING FOR LOVE

Searching for attractive, flirtatious, yet professional types who like to wear skirts and assume compromising positions. "Get in touch with" the head lawyer at 3DO.

ANYONE?

Please (pretty please?) contact Ion Storm

In Search Of...

The real Rob Smith. Current incarnation is clearly an alien being. We want back the level-headed computer games journalist who knows the difference between a good game (*7ribes*) and an obvious flop (*Daikotono*). We'd also like him to pick up some Starbucks on the way in. Contact Starbuck for more info.

COMPLETE SCHMUCK?

Did you or your family once buy swamp-land in Florida? Do you have extra money to throw away on a crap game engine? Do you like trees? Then you are just the sucker we are looking for. The *Deer Hunter II* engine can be yours, just imagine the fun you'll have. Contact Wizardworks.

FORGIVENESS WANTED

We're really sorry it took so long to patch our game and make it playable on the Internet. We are now seeking forgiveness.

Those who wish to forgive us should purchase *Unreal Tournament* and accept our sincere apologies. Please contact Epic Games.

Nostradamus Type Needed

We need to know when the hell our game is going to be done. Without a set date it is likely we will never release *Duke Nukem Forever*. Please contact 3D Realms.

Need a Posse!

Up-and-coming big time editor seeks several hangers-on, yes-men, and people who are willing to say things like "you da man." Qualified candidates will accompany editor to E3, walk behind him, and generally make him look very cool and important. Please contact Mike Salmon for info.

A DECENT HUMAN BEING WITH TASTE

Major retailer currently controlling the games industry seeks individual who recognizes a good game and doesn't push crap games on unknowing consumers. Please contact WalMart for more information on this exciting new position.

PCXL P.I. WE ASK THE QUESTIONS, SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO

Each month PCXL will go undercover in the gaming world to expose bad customer service, find out hidden truths, and generally annoy the hell out of people. This month we give you the 411 on 800 numbers, and ask some inane questions that needed answering. Following is an exact transcript of the events. These answers may explain why *Deer Hunter II* is the best selling game of all time and why people who answer phones only make minimum wage.

Comp USA

PCXL → I just bought a PC and a video card from you and it says on the back of the PC that if I remove the compartment that my warranty is invalid. Is this true? Then how do you propose I get the 3D card inside the machine?

Comp USA → I'm not sure what you're talking about, sir. I would hate to misinform you, so I'd suggest you talk to the store where you got the machine.

PCXL → Is that going to ruin my warranty?
Comp USA → I don't know sir, you'll have to talk to someone who knows something.
PCXL → I mean if I call the store, does that ruin my warranty?
Comp USA → I don't know.

Comp USA call #02

Comp USA → Hi this is Moesha, can I help you? (sweat to God her name really was Moesha)

PCXL → Yeah, umm, I recently bought this really frickin' killer game, *HoHoHo*, at one of your stores and now I'm stuck? Do you call that bit where you drop into the water and go up the other side. Then there's monsters at the top? What do I do?

Comp USA → No sir I don't have that information.

PCXL → Have you ever played that part?
Comp USA → No sir, could you tell me



The act of annoying telemarketers can be great fun.

who's the manufacturer of the game?

PCXL → I think it's Sierra.

Comp USA → You need to call them.

PCXL → But I bought the game from you, not them.

Comp USA → We didn't make the game.

PCXL → Yeah, but you didn't have any problem selling the thing to me, did you?

Comp USA → I'm sorry sir, we just can't answer those types of questions.

PCXL → Then can I take the game back?

Comp USA → No, that isn't our policy.

WalMart

WalMart → Hey buddy, what's up?

PCXL → Yeah I got some extra money from my last robbery and I wanted to buy a game. Do you play them?

WalMart → We don't have them that you can play.

PCXL → Well can I buy them there?

WalMart → Yeah, but you can't play them.

PCXL → Once I buy them can I play them?

WalMart → Not in the store.

PCXL → So I can only afford one game,

what should I get: *Deer Hunter II* or *Half-Life*? You're an expert right? So I'll let you decide for me.

WalMart → I don't really play them much, but I hear *Deer Hunter II* is real popular. You know, because there are lots of 'em.
PCXL → So I should get *Deer Hunter* over *Half-Life*?

WalMart → Yes. It costs \$14.99 and \$19.99 for *Deer Hunter* *Avenger*.

WalMart Call #2

(In Mike's best female voice)

PCXL → Yes I bought my son a game at your store and he doesn't like it. Can I take it back?

WalMart → A sonic game?

PCXL → No, a PC game called *Deer Hunter*.

WalMart → Is that a PC PlayStation game?

PCXL → No, just a PC game.

WalMart → Sorry we don't accept returns on computer games?

PCXL → But it really sucks. What am I going to do? My son will cry.

WalMart → Sorry

PCXL → You will be sorry when I drag your asses into court (Mike starts to lose girl voice, huffs, puffs, and quickly hangs up).

Computer Gaming World

PCXL → I was thinking about subscribing to *Computer Gaming World*, but then I saw this magazine *PC Accelerator* and it kicks major ass. Can I get a subscription?

CGW → Uh, *PC Accelerator*? I haven't heard of that one.

PCXL → It's a really kick-ass magazine.

CGW → Much better than *Computer Gaming World*.

CGW → I'm sorry we don't publish *PC Accelerator*?

PCXL → Do you wish you did?

PC Games

PCXL → I just bought *Fred & Strem Trophy Buck* on your recommendation as an A- and it completely blows. Do you want to buy it off me?

PC Games → I'm sorry sir, you'll have to talk to the editors about that.

Gaming Drinks

Any gamer worth his mousepad knows that choosing the proper drink can make or break the experience. When heading off to the computer for a "session" – the term for long fits of gaming – taking the right beverage and snacks is crucial. Just a couple months ago we tested, scored, and reported on the perfect gaming snacks. But what do you wash those snacks down with? Well, here it is: The Official PCXL Gaming Drink Glossary. Choose the appropriate drink for the right situation and the world is your oyster, or something appropriately keen and worthwhile like that.

CHEAP BEER



WORKS BEST WITH → Hunting games
AFFECT ON QUAKE SCORES → Scores drop 80 percent, but no one seemed to care
UPSIDE → Cheap, tasty, and a perfect fit for your open CD drive
DOWNSIDE → None to speak of
SIDE EFFECTS → Bitter Beer Face
OUR REVIEWER SAYS → "mmmmmm"
PCXL SCORE → 10

WATER



WORKS BEST WITH → Marathon games
AFFECT ON QUAKE SCORES → Minimal, but frequent bathroom breaks are costly
UPSIDE → Healthy, refreshing, and easy to clean up when spilled
DOWNSIDE → Lack of any performance enhancing characteristics (or liquor)
SIDE EFFECTS → Bladder stretchmarks
OUR REVIEWER SAYS → "Hello? Taste, where are you?"
PCXL SCORE → 6

LONG ISLAND ICE TEA



WORKS BEST WITH → Bad games
AFFECT ON QUAKE SCORES → After 4 drinks passing out is your only hope
UPSIDE → You won't remember losing
DOWNSIDE → Won't recall winning either
SIDE EFFECTS → Projectile vomiting and occasional loss of kidney function
OUR REVIEWER SAYS → "I'll never drink again, this time I mean it"
PCXL SCORE → 5

JOLT COLA



WORKS BEST WITH → Twitch games
AFFECT ON QUAKE SCORES → Good, but after 12 all you do is twitch spasmodically
UPSIDE → Your reflexes are razor sharp
DOWNSIDE → Attention span can be measured in milliseconds
SIDE EFFECTS → You can reach the heart rate of an African Bumblebee
OUR REVIEWER SAYS → "It-t-s-g-g-r-r-reat"
PCXL SCORE → 7

O'DOUL'S



WORKS BEST WITH → Driving Games
AFFECT ON QUAKE SCORES → None
UPSIDE → You can drive real cars too
DOWNSIDE → Ever tasted O'Doules?
SIDE EFFECTS → Fake beer hangovers, the worst kind
OUR REVIEWER SAYS → "Could somebody please tell me what's the point?"
PCXL SCORE → 1

SLURPIE



WORKS BEST WITH → Arcade Games
AFFECT ON QUAKE SCORES → Slurp!
UPSIDE → Great flavors like Blue Cherry
DOWNSIDE → Crap flavors like Hummus-Banana and Mayonnaise Ice
SIDE EFFECTS → Brain Freeze
OUR REVIEWER SAYS → "My eyes! I can't feel my eyes!"
PCXL SCORE → 7

IMPORTED GERMAN BEER

WORKS BEST WITH → Graphic Adventures
AFFECT ON QUAKE SCORES → An increased desire find a J-Crew skin for your character
UPSIDE → Tasty, makes you feel like you belong in a yuppie sitcom
DOWNSIDE → Price
SIDE EFFECTS → Desire to invade servers based in small Eastern European nations
OUR REVIEWER SAYS → "Heil Hefeweizen"
PCXL SCORE → 9



WHISKEY

WORKS BEST WITH → Hardcore shooters
AFFECT ON QUAKE SCORES → After 6 shots confidence is up 66 percent, but ability to hit the correct mouse buttons is down 90 percent
UPSIDE → The feeling of inflated self-importance and Clint Eastwood-attitude boost
DOWNSIDE → Looking like Clint Eastwood
SIDE EFFECTS → Whiskey-aided attempts to pick up a member of the Crackwhore clan
OUR REVIEWER SAYS → "I love you guys!"
PCXL SCORE → 8



ABSINTHE

WORKS BEST WITH → Myst and Riven
AFFECT ON QUAKE SCORES → "Absinthe Rage" increases frag counts by 66 percent
UPSIDE → Occasional Lara Croft hallucinations can be rather intense
DOWNSIDE → John Madden hallucinations can be just as intense
SIDE EFFECTS → Hearing Loss
OUR REVIEWER SAYS → "The bees, aaahh"
PCXL SCORE → 4



GATORADE

WORKS BEST WITH → Sports games
AFFECT ON QUAKE SCORES → Added electrolytes help increase endurance
UPSIDE → You can finally really be like Mike
DOWNSIDE → You can't actually play as Michael Jordan in any current game
SIDE EFFECTS → Jock itch
OUR REVIEWER SAYS → "Mmm, them electrolytes is mighty tasty"
PCXL SCORE → 8



RED BULL

WORKS BEST WITH → High-energy games
AFFECT ON QUAKE SCORES → The inevitable energy drink crash will drop frag counts by as much as 80 percent
UPSIDE → A quick, easy source of energy
DOWNSIDE → A quick easy source of vomit
SIDE EFFECTS → Wings
OUR REVIEWER SAYS → "I can fly, I really can fly"
PCXL SCORE → 3



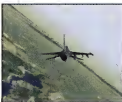
MILK

WORKS BEST WITH → Kids games
AFFECT ON QUAKE SCORES → It does a body good, but it don't do shit for Quake
UPSIDE → Reminds you of your mother
DOWNSIDE → Reminds you of your mother
SIDE EFFECTS → Milk mustache
OUR REVIEWER SAYS → "Mom! What are you doing in hot pants and a halter top?"
PCXL SCORE → 3



▶ NOW PLAYING?

These are a few games that wouldn't fit into our Review section, but, lucky for us, our Falwell clone decided to take a crack at them.



FALCON 4.0

Developer → Microprose
Publisher → Hasbro Interactive

Release Date → Now

The Sermon → Hardcore flight sims aren't just for flabby, balding, middle-aged men anymore. Microprose satisfies the casual gamer with an Instant Action mode that bypasses the techie stuff and offers multiplayer dogfighting. Just don't let the 400-page manual scare ya, because it sure as hell scared us **The Sin** → "F-16 fighter aircraft fly. And so do witches. I think any reasonable, moral person can make the connection"

The Punishment → Two words: Kamikaze Angels

Early PCXL rating → 7



MAD TRAK

Developer → Rayland Interactive
Publisher → Project Two

Release Date → Out In Europe now, coming here soon enough

The Sermon → Yet another Wipe-out clone (except the vehicles look like Hot Wheels) — all the elements are there including colorful futuristic graphics, a techno soundtrack, and weapons. It's a console game all the way, including some surprisingly bad pop-in. Unless the U.S. version gets the "fun" translated in then we'll pass

The Sin → "What is this game to mad about? Fast cars and hypnotic music lure teens into a life of degradation and hostility"

The Punishment → Head-to-head racing with the Popenmable

Early PCXL rating → 3



JUNE

Developer → lovegarage.com

Publisher → lovegarage.com

Release Date → Unfortunately, it is quite available

The Sermon → Examines the unbridled yearning of a young woman's awakening needs. Billed as an "erotic sexual fantasy," but plays like a 30-minute porno flick done entirely with still drawings and erotic moans. No interactivity, no game, and (most damaging of all) really, really bad porn

The Sin → [Ed — *The Fallwell* clone fainted half-way into June, but we can tell you that the real sin is how this disc moans sex seem boring]

The Punishment → An erotic sexual fantasy with Tammy Faye Bakker

Early PCXL rating → 1



LAURA'S HAPPY ADVENTURES

Developer → Playmobil

Publisher → Ubi Soft

Release Date → Now

The Sermon → Examines the unbridled yearning of a young woman's awakening needs. A Monica Lewinsky look-alike embarks on a 3D adventure into the Playmobil universe. If the interactivity of this game were coupled with the "adult" themes in June, then we might have had one ... err ... game worth playing. PCXL wishes the game included online deathmatching, but it'll make little girls happy

The Sin → "Teaches little girls that dressing like a whore and kneeling before old men is acceptable behavior. Laura travels to an underground fairy world — a thinly veiled reference to homosexual bars — or intern programs."

The Punishment → Laura interns with Jerry Falwell

Early PCXL rating → 0

The Heat-O-Meter

SPRING TRAINING EDITION

WHAT'S HOT

VOODOO3 → 3Dfx has released the specs for its newest line of graphics accelerator and, for the first time, will be building the boards themselves. And if that doesn't work out, the processors can double as hotplates.

QUAKECON 99 → Id announced this year's event, limited to 1000 people. This marks the first official *Quake III: Arena* tournament, plus several seminars — even one devoted to female Quake players. All 1000 attendees are hoping to meet her.

DIGITAL DIVAS → The National Institute on Media and Family reports that women bought half of all game software sold in 1998. That explains a lot. "Thanks for *Riven*, Mom, but I wanted *Unreal*."

STARCRRAFT → Blizzard's RTS was awarded the Milla d'Or award for hottest multiplayer game at Cannes' Milla Games. *Daikatana* beat it for the longest-delayed game award.

CHANGE YOUR MIND MUCH → Eidos is currently suing www.nuderaider.com for 1.1 million dollars. Two years ago they were telling journalists to check out the site.

WHAT'S COLD

3D0 → Their lead attorney has been accused of sexually harassing female employees. We finally know what 3D0 stands for — 3 Dates, Okay?

YO HO HO, ME MATIES → The Interactive Digital Software Association reports that the electronic entertainment industry lost around \$3.2 billion worldwide to software piracy in 1998, almost half of its estimated sales. It looks like eye patches have replaced bug patches.

PURPLE MOON → The girl-game developer has closed its doors for good. And Barbie was there with the bricks and cement.

AND PO'S BUTCH? → Moral watchdog Jerry Falwell claims that genderless Teletubby Tinky Winky is gay because it is purple and carries a purse. Barney and Grimace could not be reached for comment. Tinky Winky has been quoted as saying, "Bapalappa lalappa babapalappa bapalapp."

ID → Id Software's website was hacked, replacing its top page with a plea for a notorious hacker's release from prison. The hacker has since been offered the lead programmer position for *Quake IV*.

GAME KILLER

FIELD & STREAM TROPHY BUCK

GETS FRIED...

Here at PCXL we are constantly faced with the worst of the worst games.

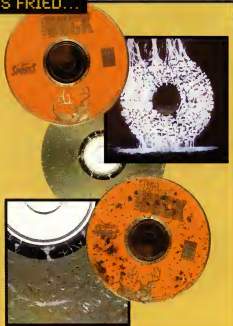
Often times they are so bad that throwing them away is not satisfying enough. It's a lot like one of those cheesy thriller movies where the bad guy is so bad that it's not good enough for him to die of a bullet wound, three story fall, or frying pan to the back of his head. Instead, he must die from something much worse, like a grenade exploding in his spleen.

Getting rid of really bad games should be just as satisfying. So the next time you spend \$40 on a dog of a game (and if you read our reviews, this wouldn't happen) don't get mad, get even.

Method #1

The Microwave Meltdown

All you have to do stick your favorite bad disc into the Nuker for 30 seconds or more until it begins to spark and make noises. The resulting cracked disc is an artistic testament to how much you hate the game. While we can't guarantee that this will not blow up your family microwave (ours hasn't heated Pop Tarts quite as quickly since we tried this), the Microwave Meltdown is an eminently satisfying way to get even with a really helthous game.



DEVELOPER SPOTLIGHT

DreamForge Entertainment

Greensburg, PA, is not what might be considered a throbbing hub of game development. Still, an hour from Pittsburgh, this sleepy town is home to DreamForge Entertainment, a genuine veteran of the PC gaming business. As they approach their ninth birthday, their list of credits is impressive, and though their name has never been especially prominent, the recent critical success of the ASC Games-published horror adventure, *Sanitarium*, has put DreamForge on the more mainstream map.

Tabletop RPG-inspired games are evidently DreamForge's area of specialty. A relationship with SSI produced *Dungeon Hack* as well as the other hugely popular AD&D games *Ravenloft: Strahd's Possession*, *Ravenloft: Stone Prophet*, and *Menzoberronzon*. After New World Computing published the critically acclaimed *Anvil of Dawn*, it was set to turn it into an ongoing franchise when the popularity of their own *Might and Magic* line took precedence.

DreamForge has used *Sanitarium's* success as a primer for greater branding of their developer name, and before too long you're increasingly likely to see the DreamForge logo. Jane Yeager Noel, Project Lead on *Werewolf* and the company's first official



DreamForge moments after their plane crashed in the Andes, can you guess who they ate first?

employee, says, "That success now has publishers saying that we can do adventure games, which of course we can, and this adds to the roleplaying products we've already been successful with." But as a developer, any work can be good work, and Disney's official game for *101 Dalmatians* proved to be the most commercially successful of DreamForge's titles.

But size matters, and so does spirit. There's a definite sense of

company-wide pride in the critical success of *Sanitarium*. According to Jim Namestka, DreamForge president, nearly everyone in the 60-strong company was involved in the game at some point, especially towards the end.

The location no doubt adds to the family atmosphere, and an ever-expanding size has not spoiled that essence. Having recently finished *TNN Trophy Hunter* (the less said about that the better) DreamForge has a *Worhammer* 40,000-based game also in development, with many, many other project possibilities floating around the office.

An enthusiasm for tabletop roleplaying would be a major asset during any DreamForge job interview. A number of different games are played on weekdays in the company's new office boardroom. That also suggests, quite rightly, that many of the employees are just a little bit crazy.

Whether it's the frigid weather, the size of the town, Pennsylvania in general, or just the industry that they work in, the DreamForge staff

STATUS

NO. OF EMPLOYEES → 60
 NO. OF EMPLOYEES IT TAKES TO DEMO WEREWOLF → 14
 NO. OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES SEEN → 3
 NO. OF PLAYERS AT ONE WEREWOLF PEN AND PAPER GAME → 6
 (SHOCKING) PERCENTAGE OF THOSE DATING → 100
 NO. OF POSTERS OF BACKSTREET BOYS → 1
 NO. OF POSTERS OF TORI AMOS → 2
 NO. OF POSTERS OF ROLEPLAYING GAMES → just over 100

really comes across as many people of the same mind — and that's got to be a good thing for development purposes. As Namestka concludes, "Ultimately, we're just damn nice people."

With the egomaniacal nature of many development companies taking precedence over the quality of products in the past few years, it's refreshing to witness a group of people who are in the business for the love of the games they make. If only that were the case in parts of Texas. ➤



This particular locale in *Sanitarium* just happens to look exactly like DreamForge's company break room.

→ Welcome to this latest collection of musings from our devoted following. Please feel free to contribute to this section. Your feedback is always appreciated. A small request: Write legibly, and try to make your comments interesting and informative. Or, at the very least, have a point. Or, feel free to write in and tell us how much you think we rock/suck/smell/offend/rule/cause hilarity/make your PC gaming all the more enjoyable. Thank you.

IMMATURE DRUNKEN SLUTS

You guys are depraved, demented, sick, perverted, immature, drunken sluts ... I like that in a magazine.

Brad

You forgot belligerent and offensive, but otherwise, thanks.

In the last issue you mentioned that no games were set in a colon. Do not pass go — do not collect \$200. In *Space Quest 6* the player did spend a portion of the game in a human colon.

Randall Sorenson

Our mistake, thanks for the reminder. We also forgot the horror adventure game *Harvester*, which made players find their way out of a colon, through a sphincter. Although a few of the *Redneck Rampage* games stunk so badly we thought they could have been made in a colon.

I'm fed up with the people writing in, badmouthing this magazine for its bad taste in jokes and female photos. Screw them! They're wrong! Everything about PCXL appeals to the average guy (or Mexican transvestite). This magazine rules.

P.S.: The Canadian guy who wrote in, desecrating our beer, is a crime bastard!

Graeme C Smith

Thank you Graeme, but I think your comments have alienated our entire North American readership. According to NAFTA standards, PCXL is no longer allowed to print your letters.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN... OUR READERS!

What happened to those really cool and funny warnings on the cover of your mag. They were funny as hell! I laughed out loud every time I read one. Put them back on your cover.

Dez

The surgeon general determined they are bad for newsstand sales.

ED LOVER

MORE ED LEE PICTURES! I laugh my ass off every time I see his goofy late-for-work mug. Also, you don't seem to have enough steamy pics of Salma Hayek, please correct these problems.

Mike Dermott

Well, this ought to make you really happy. It's Ed making friends with Salma on one of her visits to PCXL.



I think we finally figured out what Ed does in the morning.

MOON PIE DEBATE

On page 120, you had a column about the best videogame snack foods ... in this article you mentioned Moon Pies, and asked the question, "Does anyone under the age of 60 eat these anymore?"

I don't think people still eat "Moon Pies." However Little Debbie sells a much cheaper version of them called "Marshmallow Pies." They're just as good, and just as unhealthy, but for half the price! They expand in your stomach when mixed with any carbonated beverage!

Tommy Gober
LeTourneau Univ. — TX

Pretty smart for a guy who goes to a college named after a tractor.

CELEBRITY SEX SHOW

Real celebrity nude pics! Where else on the Net would you find Johnny Depp, Kate Winslett, Madonna, & Barbara Streisand buck ass naked to the world?

Your daily e-mail erotica

Why in the hell would we want to find naked pictures of Johnny Depp and Barbra Streisand?

ILLCIT DETAILS

All I would like to say is that your magazine inspired me to start reading computer mags again. I've read most magazines and they were all boring. No pictures, no insults, just tree huggin' hippie crap. But yours had everything.

P.S. Could you send me a list of all the people at your mag that sniff, snort, shoot anything weird.

Steven Kirk

Hector (PCXL scarecrow/Managing Editor/Asst. Art Director) has just been released from the Betty Ford Clinic for sniffing modeling glue. Gia has been known to snort large amounts of instant Jell-O mix, and Mike occasionally goes to grade schools and shoots whatever random, cute animals they have lying around. The rest of the staff have more serious issues.

I have to point out that you missed a major use of the Dark Archon in *Brood Wars*. Stealing drones. Why? Because when you steal a drone, you can build the structures of the race that you stole it from. You could have all three races in your camp, under your control. Platoons of Zerglings followed up by Dragoons and Siege tanks. If you can do it, you've got a serious advantage in any game.

Jan Sacharuk

Good call. We tried it and it works.

STAFF SONGS

The Hector Salazar Song (Sung to the tune of "Ghetto Superstar" by Pras, ODB and Mya)

PRAS:

Yo, we got wheat an' corn, we try ta weather the storm, But those crows start to eat it just as soon as they born.

I tried busting caps, I tried setting traps, But the mo-fos always sneakin up on my ass.

I need ta scare 'em away, do it night an day, So I got me a man made entirely of hay.

He's overlookin' his kingdom Like king Solomon, Now the crows are all gone and so on, and so on.

MYA (Chorus):
Hector Salazar,
that is who you are,
Comin from a farm,
keepin crows unharmed.

Run away with me,
to my family's place,
You can scare crows for my brother, uh-huh,
From one pasture to another,
uh-huh.

H.E. Pennypacker

A true lyrical ganster. We might just have a new PCXL lyricist.

Gaming M

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(BUT, THEN AGAIN, NEITHER DO WE)

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FIRST PERSON

Are you being ripped?

Hello, I'm Johnny RandomGuy and I bought *Unreal* last year when it came out, hoping to have it replace *Quake II* as my gaming option of the moment. Naturally, once the single player experience was done, I'd still have great value for my money playing deathmatches against friends and strangers from all corners of the globe over the Internet, right? Well, the months have passed and I'm feeling ripped. I've patched and patched and patched again, and now that *Unreal*'s just about playable, everyone's bugged off to play something else.

So what am I supposed to do? Buy *Unreal Tournament*, that's what. And what do I have to say to that? Not a chance — until you fix the mess of *Unreal* multiplayer that Epic promised to repair months ago. When the game I bought is finished and playable as it was advertised and presented, then I'll look at the next product — and not a moment before.

Like every other gamer with an eye for a great game, I bought *Half-Life*, figuring, (as advertised) that I'd play the single player option and then take my skills online. Well, what a single player experience. But online? Straight-up deathmatch was the only option, and my expectations are getting higher with each successive

release. So, I ask again, what am I supposed to do? Buy *Team Fortress 2*? And what do I have to say to that? Not a chance — until *Half-Life* delivers some of the other options that round out what is, admittedly, the best gaming experience I've ever had.

Team Fortress Classic is a definite step in the right direction. It's free, it's okay, and it offers a different experience. So that's *Half-Life*'s excuse. What about *Unreal* and its *Tournament*? Am I being

asked to spend twice the money for the game that I bought several months ago? I expected *Unreal* to offer the Internet playability it promised. I expected that within a few weeks, not nearly a year later, at a cost of \$50.

What happened to companies shipping the game that they promise in the build-up? *Unreal Tournament*? Yeah, lots of funky new textures, and models that look like real people up close. But who the hell is going to get that close in a deathmatch, just to see how realistic your opponent looks? For another \$50? Here's an idea, finish the game — all of it — before you ship. Sure, we all want the games now, but how about not ripping off consumers by releasing an elaborate patch for a game and calling it a whole new, full-priced product. You listening?

—ROB "INDUCTEE TO BETTY FORD'S HOUSE O' CRACK ADDICTION" SMITH

SECOND PERSON

Quit yer whining, you cheap bastard! So, *Half-Life* delivered the "best gaming experience" you've ever had and you're still not satisfied? Hey, I don't know what you're smoking over there (well, actually, I do ... and you need help, my friend), but if you want to play multiplayer *Quake II*, then play *Quake II* and stop bitching about how other games don't match it.

In case you didn't hear the news, multiplayer *Unreal* was patched up, bub. Maybe it's not perfect, but its exemplary first-person experience and unrivaled graphics were enough to satisfy me. Speaking of which, where's it's patch to fix *Quake II*'s single-player experience? It's downright lame when compared with *Unreal* or *Half-Life*. Maybe I should hold off on buying *Quake III* until that detail is taken care of, huh?

And why not get free updates for all my games? Why spend \$50 each year for a new sports game update when I already paid hard-earned cash for the original? It should all be free, free, free!

Of course, companies have an obligation to fix their buggy products, but they shouldn't be required to provide free extras to miserly ignorant sluts more interested in saving up for a new crack pipe than a worthy game.

—CHUCK "THE VOICE O' REASON" OSBORN

NEXT MONTH?

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A PCXL EXCLUSIVE! The highly-anticipated game from the "best developer in the industry" will soon be on shelves. We've got everything you need to know about Act Three, the Barbarian Class, new monsters, new spells, and first ever details on the quests, as well as exclusive screenshots. Plus whatever else we can come up with on deadline night.



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Strategy Game of E3



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